

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE literature on Amos is already extensive, but it is some time since any adequate, or at least elaborate, commentary has appeared in English. The first edition of Driver's commentary appeared thirty-two years ago; it is fifteen years since Edghill's commentary appeared, and the revised edition of Sir George Adam Smith's brilliant 'Book of the Twelve Prophets,' published last year, is not exactly a commentary. In the meantime new problems have emerged—the problem of the possible influence of Egyptian prophecy upon Hebrew prophecy, the problem of the origin of eschatology and of its place in Hebrew prophecy, the problem of the psychology of prophecy, and the nature of the prophetic consciousness. To these might be added the problem of metrical structure, and the need for a fresh consideration of many incidental points due to the progress of textual criticism and the advances made by historical and archaeological studies. There is clearly room for a new book on Amos, and we have it in the *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos*, by the Rev. Richard S. CRIPPS, M.A., B.D., to which we extend a hearty welcome (S.P.C.K.; 15s.).

Apart from the peculiar fascination of the problems to which we have alluded, Amos is on many grounds pre-eminently worthy of study. Cornill has described him as 'one of the most wonderful and inexplicable phenomena in the history of the human spirit.' He is the oldest and surely one of the very greatest of the literary prophets; next to

Jonah, his book is perhaps the easiest to read and his thought the easiest to follow; he emphasizes the importance of social righteousness with a quite titanic power, and he raises in the acutest form one of the most crucial questions of Old Testament study—the prophetic attitude to ritual and sacrifice.

Alike on the more familiar and on the more recent problems, Mr. CRIPPS, who is obviously master of all the relevant literature, has much that is valuable to say. Not the least interesting feature of his lengthy Introduction, in which the major problems are connectedly discussed, is his discussion of the date of Amos. This is much more than a mere question of chronology, for it touches the nature of the prophetic consciousness and the content of the prophetic message. The farther back Amos can be put, the less can Assyria have been on his horizon, and the doom which he repeatedly holds over guilty Israel will be, though doubtless real enough, yet vague, a doom to be executed by some power of which Amos is sure, but which he does not distinctly envisage. And conversely, the later we can set the prophet, the more probable will it be that Assyria is the instrument which is to effect the Divine chastisement upon Jehovah's people. As against those who would put the appearance of the prophet about 760 or even 750 B.C., Mr. CRIPPS argues skilfully for the date 742 or 741. By this time Tiglath-pileser had been three or four years upon the throne of Assyria, and so clear-eyed a seer as Amos, deeply convinced of the sin of Israel,



must have read in his accession the death-warrant, or at least the heavy and bitter chastisement, of his people. The prophets can interpret the signs of the times, to which their contemporaries are blind.

Another important feature of the discussion is Mr. CRIPPS' treatment of the attitude of Amos to Judah. While inclined, with most scholars, to reject the authenticity of the oracle against Judah in 2<sup>4t</sup>, he makes the point again and again that the impartial Amos must have included Judah within the scope of his stern message. He would have been the last man to exempt any guilty nation, even his own, from a doom she deserved. The references to Israel, Mr. CRIPPS thinks, should usually be taken to cover the whole of Jehovah's people, Judah no less than Israel. This is a point worthy of serious consideration.

On the vexed question of the attitude of the prophets to the sacrificial system, Mr. CRIPPS is not so emphatic as many recent, and especially most German, scholars have been. He admits, of course, that Amos' allusion in 5<sup>25</sup> to Israel's religious experience in the wilderness proves that for him sacrifice was not *necessary*; but in commenting on 4<sup>4</sup> he asks, 'Is he not upbraiding his hearers for sacrificing at the sanctuaries in *such a manner* as to be displeasing to Jehovah?' Even if this milder interpretation of the mind of Amos be accepted, it is at any rate gratifying to find Mr. CRIPPS admitting that 'in general it may be said that the great prophets, however interpreted, were closer to God's truth than were the priests' (p. 341). He 'would hesitate,' he says elsewhere, 'to believe that God in any sense really wished for, still less commanded, ritual slaughtering. It was a very widely spread ancient rite; and, at most, He allowed it.'

With regard to Egyptian influence on Hebrew prophecy, there is no need to deny its abstract possibility. There is almost certainly some literary connexion between the religious poetry of Israel and Babylon, and between the Wisdom literature of Israel and Egypt, and there are undoubted resemblances between Hebrew prophecy and the

few extant fragments of Egyptian prophecy; but, whatever may be said of the form, so far as the contents are concerned Egyptian influence is negligible. The differences are far more striking than the resemblances, and in the most crucial point of all, the difference is most conspicuous. As Mr. CRIPPS puts it, 'in Egyptian oracles the moral note, though sometimes struck, always remains low and scarcely audible.'

One of the most valuable parts of Mr. CRIPPS' discussion is that which deals with ecstasy, vision, and audition in the prophets, or what we may broadly call the psychology of prophecy. In what sense are the five visions of Amos to be interpreted? Was the prophet a 'seer' in the sense in which Amaziah contemptuously addresses him? Were his 'visions' just ordinary experiences of drought, a plague of locusts, etc., upon which, with his ethical insight and passion, he put an ethical interpretation, or were they in some sense abnormal or ecstatic experiences?

On this delicate point Mr. CRIPPS wisely declines to dogmatize, but he offers interesting analogies from the experience of St. Francis, St. Theresa, St. Catherine of Siena, Juliana of Norwich, George Fox, the Sadhu Sundar Singh, and other Christian mystics. He makes the probable suggestion that, 'on "seeing" the thing, Amos thereupon fell into the vision state, in which he was under the Divine influence' (p. 218), and argues with much plausibility that the condition of psychic vision provides a vehicle for God to communicate a revelation to His prophet. God neither leaves His servants entirely to think out their own gospel, nor is He content merely to stimulate the healthy processes of their minds. There is more than that. How much more may be indicated by two quotations.

One is from Mr. G. C. Joyce. 'However much subjectivity there was in the form which the vision assumed, it does not, therefore, become the mere product of human imagination and destitute accordingly of authority. To those who profess their belief in a Spirit who "spake by the prophets," it is clothed with the dignity of a revelation.'



The other quotation is from Professor J. B. Pratt. 'May it, then, perhaps be that the mystics are the seers of our world, and that whenever they open the eyes of their souls, the Eternal Light pours in; and that though we blind ones learnedly describe, generalize, and explain their experience by regular psychological laws which take account only of the psycho-physical organism, still the light is really there and the mystic apprehends it directly, even as he says? This question is not for psychological discussion. Nothing that the psychology of religion can say should prevent the religious man from seeing in his own spiritual experience the genuine influence of a living God.'

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Professor C. C. J. WEBB, well known as Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oxford, and as a Gifford lecturer, has published three lectures which he delivered at the University of Durham last November under the title *Religion and the Thought of To-day* (Milford; 2s. 6d. net). The subjects of the lectures are 'The Study of Religion: Problems and Methods,' 'The Debt of Modern Philosophy to the Christian Religion,' and 'The Problem of Religion in Contemporary Thought.' Professor WEBB has an irritating habit of burdening his sentences with elaborate qualifications, which makes him a little difficult—or at least laborious—to read. But he is worth reading, and these lectures are particularly worth reading, especially by teachers and preachers of religion. We propose to summarize the third of the lectures, that on 'The Problem of Religion in Contemporary Thought.'

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Professor WEBB begins with a vivid contrast. He goes back a hundred and fifty years, and contrasts the situation of religion then with its situation to-day. A hundred and fifty years ago religion was universally accepted as a normal feature of human life. To profess no religion was something strange and abnormal. No State was to be found that did not acknowledge some form of religion. And, even when the tenets of the religion were criticised,

at least there was a deference given to its authority in outward show. The situation is different to-day. Most States count impartiality or indifference on religious matters to be a fundamental principle of their policy. There is no attempt at coercion, and disbelief of religious doctrine is too common to excite surprise or to incur obloquy. This does not necessarily imply that religion is vanishing among men. On the contrary, it may be said that it has gained by the defection of a host of merely nominal adherents. But the contrast holds good all the same.

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The situation of religion to-day will be clarified if we follow Professor WEBB in a further contrast. There were two outstanding facts about the religion of the eighteenth century. One was the general assumption that the reasonableness of religious faith could be proved to any man of competent intelligence quite apart from his possession of any specifically religious experience. 'Proofs' of the existence of God established that belief on metaphysical grounds. And with reference to Christianity in particular, it was held that on ordinary principles of historical evidence it could be put beyond doubt that miracles had occurred which evidenced the supernatural nature of Him who performed them. Religious belief was a matter of intellectual proof.

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The other fact about the eighteenth-century religion was the beliefs which were taken for granted as embodying the essence of religion, and especially of Christianity. (1) One was the *transcendence* of God, who is a Being quite distinct from the world which He had created by an exercise of His will. (2) The second was that Christianity stands or falls with the authority of Scripture, which was a revelation from above and entirely exempt from error. And (3) finally, that the ultimate sanction of religion was the eventual happiness or misery of the individual in another life. It was on this ground that appeals for acceptance of religious truth were based.

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Now in all these respects, in regard to both of these facts, and all these beliefs, the situation to-day is totally different. To begin with, the 'proofs'



of the existence of God are discredited by contemporary thinking. Kant's damaging criticism was the first blow to shake them. But they have been shaken. And to-day it is accepted that to force religion on a reluctant mind by such reasonings and apart from some religious experience in the person is a vain proceeding. It would be as idle to attempt this as to expect to create by arguments an appreciation of poetry or music.

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The new defence of religion rests on other grounds. It does not aim at compelling men to admit God's reality by argument, but rather calls on them to recognize in themselves something which makes God real. God is to be *found* within the soul rather than *inferred* from phenomena. Obviously this God is an *immanent* rather than a *transcendent* God. And that emphasis is one of the great religious changes of the last hundred years. It has been immensely aided by the doctrine of evolution. Evolution manifestly goes far more readily with an immanent God, just as creation goes easily with a transcendent God. This belief in an immanent God has, then, been fostered both by the abandonment of the old idea that the existence of God would be proved by intellectual means, and by the discovery that life has been a development by continuous process.

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The idea of evolution has had another important result. It has created a new *historical sense*. It came to be seen that to write the history of anything it is necessary to see its connexion with what went before and how it grew out of its predecessor by a gradual and continuous growth. Now this new historical sense had far-reaching effects on the study and criticism of ancient literature, and especially on the Bible. And this has marked a revolution even greater and more momentous than the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The whole previous conception of the authority of Scripture has been modified. The change may be put roughly thus : that the fact of some statement being in the Bible does not necessarily guarantee its truth, or even its religious value, and that something which is true and right does not need the sanction of its being in Scripture to be accepted.

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Once more, a very great change has taken place in our view of the future. We do not believe that the salvation of the individual in a future life is the chief end of religion and the ground of its appeal to the unconverted. And this is due to the disappearance of the traditional Christian 'other-worldliness,' for which this world and its concerns are only a passing interest ; we are 'pilgrims and strangers' in this world ; our real interest and concern are in eternity. The beginnings of the modern reaction against this view go back to the Renaissance. In Europe generally *double-mindedness* became characteristic of men's outlook ; that is, they had a twofold life, one of interest in this world, the other of belief in another. But gradually this was left behind in favour of a view which found the centre of gravity in religion in the present, in an experience which is 'eternal life,' and which includes all man's present concerns. The Great War gave a blow to this 'immanentism' (as Professor WEBB calls it). Many serious minds began to doubt the value of the easy-going philosophy which finds God in everything and in everybody, and sees the hope of the world in the forces of civilization. There has been a marked reaction against this 'present worldliness,' and a tendency to revert to a belief in transcendence, to emphasize the otherness, the strangeness, the irrationality in religion. Otto and his 'numinous,' Barth and his uncompromising theology of grace as discontinuous with the whole process of civilization, are portents. It is, therefore, the task of our age on the one hand to secure the gains of the past, the conviction of the autonomy of religious experience, and the recognition of God's immanence ; and also on the other to rise above a mere faith in civilization and to grasp the essential truth of transcendence, that God is above us, a Reality other, yet not wholly other, than ourselves.

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In his most recent volume, *The Primitive Church*, reviewed in this issue, Canon STREETER succeeds in investing what might easily be a dull discussion with a good deal of human interest. His main subject is the primitive Church Order, and through-



out the discussion he keeps in view the rival claims in this reference of Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism, and Independency. When he comes to the position, in the primitive age, of the Church in Syria, he encounters the dominating figure of Ignatius, and gets a chance, which he seizes with both hands, of an interesting study in human motives.

The letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, written on his way to martyrdom in the Colosseum at Rome, *c.* A.D. 115—four from Smyrna, three when he had reached Troas—are described by Canon STREETER as, next to the Epistles of Paul, the most vivid piece of literature, considered simply as a human document, that has survived from the early Church; and they pose a question which is one of the most controverted in early Church history, namely, whether the Church Order in primitive times was definitely Episcopalian or not. That it was so these letters in themselves would lead us to believe; on the other hand, emanating also from the Church in Syria, not long before the Ignatian letters, there is the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, with its testimony in favour of Independency. Hence arises a difficult problem, apart from the problems raised by other early documents which may be read in support of the Presbyterian claim.

The problem of Church Order raised by the co-existence in Syria of the *Didache* and the Ignatian letters is relieved, according to Canon STREETER, by two considerations. The first is that the monarchical episcopate in Ignatius' day was a comparatively recent institution at Antioch, and not yet securely established. Two facts supporting this view are: (1) that in the traditional lists of Bishops of the great Sees only one name is given between Ignatius and the Apostles; (2) that six of the seven letters are filled with exaggerated and passionate exaltation of the bishop's office, as though the monarchical status and authority of that office was as yet not sufficiently ancient to be secure.

The second consideration mitigating the difficulty

of the historical problem aforesaid has to do with the personal idiosyncrasy of Ignatius himself. In this connexion Canon STREETER would make five points, prefacing his exposition with the remark that 'Ignatius, like many who have achieved high fame, was clearly of the neurotic temper. His letters on every page reveal a high-minded personality keyed up to that peculiar intensity which is a symptom of that temper. Genius is often a concomitant of the neurotic constitution. Not that genius is the result of the neurosis; but that same hypersensitiveness to impressions, which makes the genius quick to perceive what other men ignore, exposes him in early life to injury from experiences which would leave unscathed persons of more ordinary clay. A piece of grit that will derange a watch will not affect a traction engine.'

(1) The first and most obvious evidence that Ignatius was a man of abnormal psychology is the prophetic seizure he alludes to in writing to the Philadelphians (vii. 1); and that he was subject to prophetic seizures appears in his letter to the Ephesians (xx. 2). Like other 'prophets' of his time, he had an overwhelming conviction of possession by the Holy Spirit. Such an experience is analogous to that of the medium in modern times.

(2) Another trait suggestive of psychological abnormality is the reference in Trall. v. to mystic visions, of which with an unhappy mixture of pride and humility Ignatius at once boasts, yet declines to reveal the content. His claim to have experienced mystic visions shows to us that he was addicted to trance-practice.

(3) Still another abnormal trait is the existence in Ignatius' mind of 'the will to power.' Like many religious leaders since, he painfully and conscientiously *wills* to be humble, but in Trall. iii. 3, Rom. iv. 3, ix. 1, and other passages thoughts of self-esteem surge up, and it is not less self-esteem when it prides itself on not being proud. Even in Trall. iv. we still seem to be listening to a man who publicly disclaims a virtue expecting that his hearers will repudiate the disclaimer.



(4) With Ignatius the desire for martyrdom has risen to the height of passion (Trall. x., xii. 3). It is not, however, out of a neurotic desire to suffer ('masochism'), but out of the desire to attain what was the highest personal distinction in the contemporary Church.

(5) Finally, it would appear that the psycho-neurotic tendencies latent in Ignatius' mental constitution were intensified by his experience of prisoner-baiting on the long road to Italy (Rom. v. 1). 'The tension of a soul sorely overstrained rings in every sentence of this pathetic, yet still heroic, figure. We cannot but note the unconscious egoism in many a sentence; yet it is the egoism of a noble mind unstrung.'

Now Canon STREETER asks us to bear in mind the psychological idiosyncrasy of Ignatius in considering the references in his letters to Church government. In particular it is to be remembered that nervous overstrain commonly results in a loss of the sense of proportion, and not infrequently in an obsessive concentration on certain dominant

ideas. To Ignatius the monarchical episcopate is literally an *idée fixe*, which accounts for the extravagance of his language in regard to the episcopal office (Eph. vi. 1; Magn. vi. 1; Trall. iii. 1; Smyrn. viii. 2-ix. 1). The same topic recurs, significantly enough, when, on the occasion already alluded to, he was speaking under the control of the prophetic spirit—and the subconscious mind is always the citadel of the *idée fixe*.

'When a man on his road to death is seen using every opportunity to impress one idea with all the prestige that martyrdom would give him; when he enforces it in language neurotically extravagant; and when there is evidence that his subconscious as well as his conscious mind is dominated by the same idea, we may well conclude that it stood to him as the summation of his life's work. But if the consolidation of an ecclesiastical discipline centred in the monarchical bishop was the ideal for which Ignatius had lived, and which he hoped by a martyr's death firmly to rivet on the Church at large, it is a fair presumption that it was a thing which he had had to fight for in his own Church at Antioch.'

## Books that have influenced our Epoch.

### Matthew Arnold's 'Literature and Dogma.'

By PROFESSOR JAMES MOFFATT, D.D., UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, NEW YORK.

*Literature and Dogma* was published in 1873. Like *Unto This Last*, it had been running in the 'Cornhill Magazine' before it appeared in book form. Within less than twelve months the volume had been three times reprinted, and ten years later a cheap edition was issued, with a new preface, so steady was the demand for it in England. Professor Saintsbury pronounces it the worst book Arnold ever wrote, but there is no disputing its vogue half a century ago. One may admit that as a literary piece it will never rank with four other products of 1873, with Morley's *Rousseau*, with Pater's *Studies in the Renaissance*, with Renan's *L'Antéchrist*, or with Hamerton's *Intellectual Life*. But, for all his amateurishness and piffisflage,

Arnold was in earnest, and he touched a subject of immediate interest to the English people in the nineteenth century. His reputation as a literary critic swung his book into a wide circulation, yet he did not set out to write a literary work. He was for the time being a lay preacher and teacher, who addressed an erring generation. *Literature and Dogma*, it must be recollected, came in the wake of *Essays and Reviews* and of Colenso's *Old Testament sensations*. *Essays and Reviews* in 1860 had particularly aroused the religious public by its presentation of scientific and historical criticism. For the first time the bearings of these upon the interpretation of the Bible were indicated, and the controversy had agitated all schools of



faith. Arnold was seriously concerned. He saw or thought that he saw Christianity endangered by an entangling alliance with outworn ideas of religion, and the Bible compromised by the Church's adherence to impossible views about miracles and prophecy. He watched the triumphant school of men like Clifford challenging religion in the name of science, and he had a genuine fear, on the other hand, that the masses might relapse into the cheap atheism of Bradlaugh. The orthodox either in the Church of England or among the Dissenters seemed to Arnold to possess no weapons of defence against these adversaries; to 'restore religion as they understand it, to re-enthroned the Bible as explained by our current theology, whether learned or popular, is absolutely and for ever impossible—as impossible as to restore the feudal system, or the belief in witches.' Such being the situation, what was to be done? This, Arnold argued: to show that the religion of the Bible is not what popular theology thinks, that it is really a natural religion which can be verified in experience, that the Bible is literature first and foremost, not a book of dogma, and that the man in the street must be taught, as he reads the Bible, 'to read between the lines, to discern where he ought to rest with his whole weight, and where he ought to pass lightly.' Such was Arnold's honest aim. He believed sincerely in the religious function of the Bible, and he wrote this book in order to preserve the Bible alike from its agnostic opponents and from its professional defenders. No duty seemed to him more pressing than this, no subject more vital.

Arnold would not have been Arnold if he had not been what some of his critics have called 'repetitious,' in this book. But this tiresome habit of reiterating phrases was deliberate; he intended to educate his readers, and his easy conversational style led him to say the same thing over and over again for the sake of emphasis. Neither would he have been himself had he not dropped scathing comments on a variety of men and things. Unitarians, Romanists, Dissenters, and Bishops, all come in for scathing sentences, as he proceeds on his way. Nevertheless, these *obiter dicta* do not interfere with the determined purpose of his pages, despite their occasional irrelevance and errors in taste. 'If we can but dissolve what is bad,' he wrote to a correspondent in 1868, 'without dissolving what is good!' This hope and aim is the clue to *Literature and Dogma*; he desired to dissolve the inferior elements of belief about the Bible in order to conserve the real elements.

Arnold's thesis was indeed simple. The object of religion is conduct ('and when we are asked further, what is conduct?—let us answer: *Three-fourths of life*') or righteousness; the 'true meaning of religion is thus, not simply *morality*, but *morality touched by emotion*.' The italics are his own. It was on these axioms that he based his argument, and the cool assumption that they were axioms did more than anything else to exasperate his philosophical critics; when ethicists struck hard at these preliminaries, their attacks on his idea of the moral sentiment generating religion and of this unexplained 'emotion' were too powerful to be brushed aside. But what excited far more passion in religious circles was the calm transcript of Biblical history which followed. Righteousness, Arnold argued, is the absorbing idea of the Old Testament. The Hebrews were distinguished not for metaphysics but for moral passion; 'the monotheistic idea of Israel is simply *seriousness*.' In the primitive stage Hebrewism was wrapped up in the pursuit of individual righteousness; that righteousness tended to life was the dominant belief of the prophets at their best. Arnold will not hear of this being called a revelation. 'Religion springing out of an experience of the power, the grandeur, the necessity of righteousness, is revealed religion, whether we find it in Sophocles or in Isaiah.' But he admits that the Hellenic spirit did not develop this so fruitfully as Israel, and even in Israel, alas, the primitive faith became corrupted in the Exile by Messianic and apocalyptic dreams! Israel, 'who originally followed righteousness because he felt that it tended to life, might and did naturally come at last to follow it because it would enable him to stand before the Son of Man at His coming, and to share in the triumph of the saints of the Most High.' All this is superstition or *Aberglaube*, 'a kind of fairy tale which a man tells himself, which no one, we grant, can prove impossible to turn out true, but which no one can prove certain to turn out true.' Then came Jesus to restore the primitive faith in righteousness by a teaching which turned the individual back upon himself, instead of attending to outward and social duties. This was 'the line in which their [the Jews'] religion was ripe for development,' and the supreme merit of Jesus was that He thereby 'gave men for right action the clearness, spirit, energy, happiness, they had lost.' He showed them the three saving qualities of self-examination, self-renunciation, and what Arnold sentimentally calls 'mildness' or 'sweet reasonableness.' Unfortunately the Evangelists and Apostles committed the



same error as the later Jews of the Exile; they mixed up the teaching of Jesus with extraneous Messianic fancies, with 'a vast *extra-belief* of a phantasmagorical advent of Jesus Christ, a resurrection and judgment, Christ's adherents glorified, His rejectors punished everlastingly.' In the history of the Church there has been far too much attention paid to this extra-belief, instead of to the pure message of the ethical Jesus. 'Thus we have the three creeds: the so-called Apostles' Creed, popular science: the Nicene Creed, learned science: the Athanasian Creed, learned science with a strong dash of temper.' Men are taught to believe these creeds are implicit in the Bible—which is fatal. What has to be done, therefore, is to read the Bible as literature, as the popular expression of what is true natural religion, and not as a collection of proof-texts for dogma. Once this simple clue is followed, once the deflecting influence of the Creeds is checked, Arnold pleads, we shall recognize the abiding value of the Bible, and there will be no fear of it losing its hold upon the modern mind. 'Righteousness and the God of righteousness, the God of the Bible, are in truth quite independent of the God of ecclesiastical dogma, the work of critics of the Bible—critics understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm.'

This was a challenge not only to evangelical and episcopal upholders of verbal inspiration, but to men like Mansel who spoke of God as the personal Governor of the universe. Against the former class of theologians it did excellent service by stressing the principle of Biblical interpretation, particularly by protesting that the Bible books were not to be read as if they were all on one level or composed at one and the same period. Such a contention was not entirely new in 1873, but it needed a frank expression, and whatever we may think of Arnold's historical equipment we ought to recognize the value of his main contention. To admit the presence of poetry and symbolism, to note the successive phases of revelation, and to appreciate the difference between periods of inspiration and periods of retrogression, are essential. Arnold taught this in *Literature and Dogma*, saying perhaps no more than Jowett and Stanley had already said, but saying it from a position in which his words, words of a layman who was the foremost literary critic in the country, fell with weight on the mind of thinking England. 'To understand that the language of the Bible is fluid, passing, and literary, not rigid, fixed, and scientific, is the first step towards a right understanding of the Bible.' Arnold did more than any one in that generation to per-

sue his contemporaries that such a step should be taken, and taken at once.

A second feature in the book is the conviction that there is no Christianity without Jesus. 'Jesus as He appears in the Gospels, and for the very reason that He is so manifestly above the heads of His reporters there is, in the jargon of modern philosophy, an absolute; we cannot explain Him, cannot get behind Him and above Him, cannot command Him.' On Arnold's principles it is not easy to see why he makes this confession. It may be true, but is it relevant to his position? When he analyses the ethical intuitions of the gospel, for example, he is far below the genius of Sir John Seeley; *Ecce Homo* penetrated more deeply into the uniqueness and essence of the teaching of Jesus than *Literature and Dogma* did; Arnold's preoccupation with what he loves to call the debonair, prepossessing spirit of Jesus showed a less skilful handling of the subject than Sir John Seeley's insistence on the constructive principles as well as the moral indignation and passion of the Master; and to argue, as Arnold actually did, that St. Paul in speaking of 'the word of the Cross' or of 'the dying of Jesus' meant the words of Jesus upon renunciation, is to set a fool's cap on exegesis. Nevertheless, forced and fanciful as his interpretation of the Gospels and Epistles often is, Arnold never imagined that there could be any future for Christianity except along the lines of Jesus. 'Nothing will do except righteousness; and no other conception of righteousness will do, except Jesus Christ's conception of it—His *method*, His *secret*, and His *temper*.' We may agree. We may have obstinate questionings as to whether Matthew Arnold's conception of that conception will do, but with his intuition we agree heartily.

Some critics were provoked by *Literature and Dogma*. *Blackwood's* reviewed it sharply as 'Amateur Theology'—an unfair insinuation, if it meant that no layman should dare to handle theological problems, but otherwise not undeserved, for Arnold was often guilty of the very sin which he rebuked as a lack of culture, namely, speaking without qualification on subjects which require expert knowledge. He caught at etymology rashly in order to support his arguments, till scholars shuddered at his casual explanations of 'man' and 'God.' He derided metaphysics with unguarded phrases. He attacked cleverly some crude forms of contemporary anthropomorphism, and preferred to speak of God as 'the stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfil the law of their being,' arguing plausibly but vainly that this truth was



scientifically verifiable. It was here that his lack of training betrayed him. Sometimes he was flippant, but the weakness of his book really lay in its inadequate equipment, philosophical and historical, a weakness which was aggravated by the author's confident self-assurance. M. Albert Réville, who reviewed the book appreciatively in the *Academy*, was by no manner of means a Calvinist, but he felt obliged to hint that his friend seemed to forget the 'mystical profundity of Calvinist doctrines and to refuse to see any but their repulsive sides.' Arnold did not forget these inner elements of Calvinism; he never knew them at all. Henry Sidgwick spoke sternly of his love for handling 'the most profound and difficult problems of individual and social life with an airy dogmatism that ignores their depth and difficulty,' and this criticism applies to his well-known treatment of miracles and prophecy, no less than to the desperate attempt to combine renunciation as taught by Jesus with the refined hedonism which was his own ethical ideal. It was indeed a true word to remind his age that Christianity must never be reduced to a programme of theology or even of ethics. 'It is a mistake, and may lead to much error, to exhibit any series of maxims, like those of the Sermon on the Mount, as the ultimate sum and formula into which Christianity may be run up. Maxims of this kind are but *applications* of the method and the secret of Jesus; and the method and secret are capable of yet an indefinite number more of such applications. Christianity is a *source*; no one supply of water and refreshment that comes from it can be called the sum of Christianity.' He was obviously thinking of his contemporary Tolstoy when he said this. But it is as sound as his protest that the Bible is unintelligible if we approach it through dogmatic creeds. Arnold scored some effective hits of this kind as he wrote *Literature and Dogma*. Still, his negative warnings are on the whole more permanent than his positive contributions, for this reason that while he was acute enough to detect the weaknesses of contemporary religion—for example, in defining the personality of God—he had not sufficient knowledge of Christianity to appreciate the strong, instinctive aims out of which these weaknesses arose. He got beyond his depth as badly as some modern psychologists do, in this region. Much in *Literature and Dogma* sounds curiously prophetic of Ritschl, and nothing more so than the depreciation of metaphysics. But then Arnold could not handle the Bible as Ritschl did, and he never recognized in Jesus what Ritschl

with his profounder faith saw. Though he realized that the Bible is a transcript of religious experience, his naturalism handicapped him as he described what that experience was. Against literalism and hasty dogmatism he proved effective, but his substitute for what they offered, his presentation of religion as devoid of a Deity who could be conceived as in any sense 'personal' for human thought and need, this was no more than 'grass on the housetop.'

Why, then, should *Literature and Dogma* continue to be read? It is still read, in its popular editions, although not nearly to the same extent as it was forty or even thirty years ago. Its Biblical criticism is for the most part out of date; newer books convey its message more briefly and brightly; and literary critics seem to pass it by with a shrug of despair as they hasten to admire the classical essays of Arnold's prose. Nevertheless, *Literature and Dogma* has a claim on us. Historically we are justified in regarding it as a pioneer work, which opened up fresh trails for later students. It helped to emancipate the public from literalism. Were it only for that, the book would deserve to be noted; Arnold had the courage and the insight to essay a task which no one else was exactly facing, and although like all pioneer work his attempt had its crudities, it evinced a perception of how things were going to move in the next generation. The very fact that so much of his argument seems to us commonplace is a proof that he was right in his main contention, and that in a wide sense he was successful in the effort to popularize newer methods of Biblical interpretation and appreciation.

Even apart from that quality, the book repays the reader. He comes upon sentences now and then which have the true ring of Arnold's style and spirit at its best. Take the close of the preface, for example: 'It has often been said, and cannot be said too often: Give to any man all the time that he now wastes, not only on his vices (when he has them), but on useless business, wearisome or deteriorating amusements, trivial letter-writing, random reading; and he will have plenty of time for culture. "*Die Zeit ist unendlich lang,*" says Goethe; and so it really is. Some of us waste all of it, most of us waste much, but all of us waste some.' Or shrewd aphorisms like these: 'Far more of our mistakes come from want of fresh knowledge than from want of correct reasoning.' 'Every time that the words *contrition* or *humility* drop from the lips of prophet or of psalmist, Christianity appears.' 'All history is an accumulation of experiences that what men and nations fall by is want of conduct.' 'Certainty and grandeur are



really and truly characters of Christianity.' 'Feeling the force of a thing is very different from understanding and possessing it'; or the famous description of Frederick Denison Maurice who had just died, 'that pure and devout spirit, of whom, how-

ever, the truth must at last be told, that in theology he passed his life beating the bush with deep emotion and never starting the hare.' Well, *Literature and Dogma* did start a hare, and the hare is still being coursed.

## Literature.

### THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

*The Primitive Church* (Macmillan; 8s. 6d. net), by Canon B. H. Streeter, contains the inaugural course of Lectures on the Hewett Foundation, delivered last year at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and at Harvard University. The author's study of the Primitive Church herein embodied is with special reference to the origins of the Christian ministry; and the result of his study is to show that there was variety in the primitive and apostolic order, and that Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Independent may each appeal to that order for confirmation of its special usage. The corollary that Dr. Streeter suggests is that a common recognition of these facts (and he sincerely believes them to be facts) will not only serve to still the voice of ecclesiastical controversy, but prepare the way for Christian unity.

These lectures appeal principally to the professional student, and from the nature of the subject are largely critical and exegetical; but Dr. Streeter, aided to no small extent by his publisher, has succeeded in producing a book which the interested layman will find not merely readable, but also in parts rich in human interest. Especially to be mentioned in this last connexion is the discussion of the attitude of Ignatius to the matter of Church Order—a discussion to which we have drawn special attention in another column.

At the outset of his book Dr. Streeter bids us disabuse our minds of the traditional picture of the Twelve Apostles sitting at Jerusalem, 'like a College of Cardinals,' systematizing the faith and order of the Primitive Church. 'They had a more urgent work to do. The Day of Judgment was at hand; their duty was to call men to repent before it was too late.' Instead of a faith and order determined from the beginning, we are to contemplate an evolution both in theology and in Church organization, explicable as a reaction of organism

to environment. In particular there is to be noticed, in reference to the Christian ministry, a movement away from the state of things where pre-eminence in the Church depends on the personal possession of some spiritual *gift* (of which 'government,' this Episcopal writer feels bound to indicate, is one of the least esteemed) towards a state of things where importance is attached to the holding of an *office* of authority. Yet in Asia (as we may gather from the Pastoral Epistles and 1 Peter), in Syria (as we may gather from the Didache and the Ignatian letters), and in Rome (as we may gather from Hebrews and James and the Epistle to Clement), during the first hundred years of Christianity, the system of government varied in the Churches, and in the same Church at different times. 'Uniformity was a later development; and for those times it was, perhaps, a necessary development.' But 'it may be that the line of advance for the Church of to-day is not to imitate the forms, but to recapture the spirit, of the Primitive Church.'

### DANIEL.

For the adequate interpretation of the Book of Daniel two qualifications are indispensable: the commentator must have a thorough knowledge of Greek, Hebrew, and especially Aramaic in its historical development, and he must have an equally thorough knowledge of Apocalyptic. Dr. Charles possesses both these qualifications in pre-eminent degree. He had already written a shorter commentary on Daniel for the Century Bible, and his great book on Revelation revealed him as a scholar who was both able and willing to take a line of his own. The same immense learning and the same independence of judgment characterize his voluminous *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Milford; 30s. net).

Dr. Charles admits that this has proved the most difficult of all his studies in an experience of nearly



forty years of research in apocalyptic literature, and he also claims that none of the great Semitic scholars who have edited Daniel seems to have had a first-hand knowledge of Apocalyptic outside Daniel. He accepts the common critical conclusion that the book was written about or shortly before 165 B.C. All the linguistic evidence points that way, and one of the very valuable features of his Introduction is the close linguistic examination of Aramaic words and phrases in relation to the development of Aramaic during the nine hundred years between 800 B.C. and A.D. 100, which reveals among other things that Daniel is considerably later than Ezra. The late date is also suggested by the relatively frequent use of the participle, and, on linguistic grounds alone, the sixth-century date which some recent scholars have endeavoured to establish is absolutely out of the question. Many interesting points are made by the way, as that the proper preposition after *אמר* in addressing God is not *ל* but *קדם*. Dr. Charles believes that there were two pre-Christian Greek versions of Daniel, and he emphasizes and illustrates the wide divergence between the LXX versions and Theodotion. In a brief discussion of the theology of the book, he points out certain mechanical elements in it and suggests an explanation of them.

The chief aim of his commentary, he tells us, is to recover, as far as possible, the oldest form of the text, and to interpret that text in conformity with the usages of Jewish Apocalyptic. He argues that, though the narrative contents may go back to the Persian period, the Aramaic is that of the first half of the second century B.C., and he vigorously defends the thesis that the whole book was originally written in Aramaic, as indeed it must have been, if it was to make any effective appeal to the Jews of that time, but that 1-2<sup>4a</sup> and 8-12 were translated into Hebrew (by three different hands) some time before 153 B.C.; otherwise the book would never have found its way into the Canon. But the text, which suffered very grievously in transcription from the very beginning, is 'in hundreds of passages wholly untrustworthy,' and the present form of the M.T. is in many respects later than the fourth century A.D.

The Commentary proper discusses with great fulness every conceivable aspect of the problems raised by the text, and the volume concludes with a translation, which gathers up the results of the exegesis. A good illustration of the quality of the Commentary is afforded by the discussion of the famous and often misapplied 12<sup>4b</sup>, which Dr. Charles, following the LXX, renders, 'till the many

become apostates and evils<sup>2</sup> be increased,' or 'the earth be filled with iniquity.' On p. xvii transcendant, p. xxv phrophecy, and on p. lxxiv Jehoiachim (*k*) should be corrected. This is in every respect a masterly commentary, and it will be many a day before it will be superseded.

### SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, AND RELIGION.

In his Gifford Lectures, *The Sciences and Philosophy* (Hodder & Stoughton; 15s. net), Professor J. S. Haldane, C.H., M.D., F.R.S., has given us 'the matured conclusions of a scientific lifetime during which the philosophical questions raised by the Sciences have been constantly before me.' These conclusions are of unusual weight and interest, for few scientists have Professor Haldane's philosophical training and aptitude, few are so well qualified for the task of correlating the various aspects of reality as revealed by the sciences. His style is singularly clear, and leaves no dubiety as to his meaning. There is, indeed, an amount of reiteration of his main ideas which, though suitable in lecturing perhaps, goes beyond what is necessary in writing.

Professor Haldane argues powerfully for a spiritual view of reality. 'The conclusion forced upon me in the course of a life devoted to natural science is that the universe as it is assumed to be in physical science is only an idealised world, while the real universe is the spiritual universe in which spiritual values count for everything.' Materialism he dismisses even with contempt. 'The time is not far distant when our successors will look back with wonder at the materialistic superstition of the times we are living in: for materialism is nothing better than a superstition, on the same level as a belief in witches or devils.' Life is not to be interpreted in terms of matter. Still less is conscious life. Reality is spiritual to the very core. The new physics has opened the possibility of a spiritual interpretation of the inorganic world—if indeed it be inorganic at all. For 'on the new theory of the atom its form is specific, and the expression of specific activity, just as is apparently the case in a living organism; and since visible bodies are made up of atoms, and "cohere" in virtue of atomic properties, we are justified in assuming that behind all superficial appearances the inorganic world may in reality be constituted on principles similar to those which we seem to find exemplified when we study life.'

It is impossible in a brief review to convey any adequate impression of the solidity of Professor Haldane's argument and of the weight of evidence



supporting it, especially in his own particular field of physiology. The whole makes a convincing restatement of the theistic position in the light of the most recent developments of science. No doubt from the Christian standpoint some of the conclusions appear rather meagre. If, as he says, 'philosophy, like religion, takes into account, not merely a part, but the whole of our experience,' it is difficult to understand why such a subject as immortality should be discussed without reference to the fact of Christ. It may also be gravely doubted whether Professor Haldane would ever have reached his confident faith in a God of love without the Christian revelation, and whether philosophy alone would have strength permanently to maintain that faith.

#### SAMARIA IN AHAB'S TIME.

The Rev. J. W. Jack, M.A., already favourably known through his scholarly study of the date of the Exodus, will enhance alike his own reputation and the debt of O.T. students to him by his equally scholarly discussion of *Samaria in Ahab's Time* (T. & T. Clark; 8s. net). It is in part a concise account of the Harvard excavations of Samaria begun twenty-one years ago, and still more a statement of certain significant conclusions which may be drawn from them, relative to the administrative system of northern Israel, the development of the northern Semitic alphabet, and many other matters. Interesting chapters on the palaces of Omri and Ahab, and on Israelite art (pottery, lamps, blue glass, etc.) are followed by a fascinating chapter on the discovered 'Ostraka,' or potsherds, and we watch with admiration the skill and the scholarship with which he compels these ostraka—which are mostly notes of small accounts of wine and oil for the palace, and of which he gives four specimens—to yield up their secrets. He shows how the proper names of persons and places throw light on the administrative system of royal stewards organized by Solomon, and apparently maintained by the kings of the northern kingdom. As these ostraka are, with one exception, the earliest specimens of Hebrew writing, Mr. Jack takes occasion to trace the evolution of the Semitic alphabet, beginning with the inscriptions of about 1900 B.C. found on the Sinaitic peninsula; and there is a valuable conspectus of ten successive forms of the alphabet from the Egyptian hieroglyphs down to the Siloam inscription of about 700 B.C. Two interesting chapters conclude the book, one on Ahab's foreign policy, in which the suggestion is

made that the real explanation of the war between Syria and Israel was that the Syrians had formed a league to resist the advance of Assyria, and that 'Ahab, owing to his ties with Phœnicia,' which for commercial reasons did not resent the Assyrian advance, 'could not be persuaded to join the league without some compulsion' from the king of Damascus and his allies. The last chapter, which deals with the religious situation, gives a brief outline of Phœnician religion and sketches the struggle of Jahwism and Baalism. On p. 20 Jehoiachim and on p. 101 Jehoiachin are inadvertently written for Jehoiakim. This able book is well calculated to evoke an interest in archæological studies.

#### THE IDEA OF VALUE.

Professor Wilbur Marshall Urban of Dartmouth College wrote a book on 'Valuation' at a time when the idea of value had not assumed the prominence in current philosophy that it possesses now. In the interval he has contributed papers to philosophical journals on various aspects of this subject. Recently he has published the mature results of his reflections in an important work, *The Intelligible World* (Allen & Unwin; 16s. net), the concluding sentence of which well epitomizes the whole: 'Philosophy is intelligible discourse about the world, and the metaphysical idiom of the Great Tradition is the only language that is really intelligible.'

By the Great Tradition is to be understood the succession in philosophy to which may be attached the names of the Platos and the Aristotles, the St. Augustines and the St. Thomases, the Fichtes and the Hegels. These are the magnanimous philosophers, and theirs the perennial philosophy. None of them has ever doubted the spiritual character of reality, of an order of perfection—the Good, Reason, God, as in ancient philosophy, or the infinite, the *causa sui*, the absolute in modern philosophy—which goes beyond and supplements the fragmentariness of our time experiences.

Opposed to the great or traditionalist philosophers are, in Professor Urban's phrase, the 'modernists.' By the 'modernists' he would have us understand all those who challenge the premises of the Great Tradition, varied and often mutually opposed as their own philosophical tendencies may be. The deepest note of the 'modernist' philosophies, as it is also their common element, is the denial of all finality, the abandonment of the ontological point of view, the divorce of existence and value.



It is in the light of this distinction between traditionalism and modernism that Professor Urban proceeds to that restatement and reinterpretation of the Great Tradition which may be said to be the objective of his entire study. All the great philosophies, as he contends, when their true inwardness is recognized, have conceived of metaphysics as value theory; the orientation of intellect towards value constitutes indeed the natural metaphysic of the human mind. Reality, truly conceived, is existence plus meaning and value. With the attempt to separate existence and value the world ceases to be 'intelligible.'

Professor Urban remarks that the worst thing one philosopher can say of another is that he is unintelligible; and this is, in fact, his own characterization of all the 'modernist' philosophies. Creative evolution, for example, a reality that creates itself gradually, he affirms to be 'one of the most unintelligible concepts that it has ever entered into the mind of man to invent.' And there are many such sweeping assertions in his book, which certainly is often couched in vigorous style.

In his examination of the fundamental problems of philosophy, such as those of space and time, origin and value, evolution, teleology, progress, Professor Urban ranges widely and intimately over the field of historical philosophy, and shows himself to be in full touch with current philosophical opinion. There is a good deal of reiteration in his pages, and sometimes there is repetition; one would wish often to know the sources of his quotations, and a more elaborate index would be useful; but many who are bewildered by certain trends of present-day philosophy will be grateful to him for his stout championship of the 'metaphysical idiom' of the Great Tradition. We should add that many 'modernist' philosophers would protest that they do not separate reality from value, but that the problem of reality and value lies beyond their universe of discourse.

#### PENTATEUCH AND HAFTORAHS.

To strengthen religious conviction among English-speaking Jews, the Chief Rabbi, Dr. J. H. Hertz, has published through the Oxford University Press the Book of Genesis, in the Hebrew text of the British and Foreign Bible Society, with an English translation—substantially the Revised Version—on the opposite page, and he has accompanied it with a commentary which, though naturally written from the Jewish standpoint and embodying the

choicest of Jewish teaching, has wisely incorporated material from all sources that are capable of shedding light (Milford; 7s. 6d., India paper 15s. net, bound in leather 21s. net). Tolstoi, Olive Schreiner, and H. G. Wells, for example, are quoted, and also scholars who do not share Dr. Hertz's attitude to Old Testament problems; for example, Procksch, Skinner, G. A. Smith, etc. This is wise as well as courageous, for in the Preface he does not conceal his 'conviction that the criticism of the Pentateuch associated with the name of Wellhausen is a perversion of history and a desecration of religion.' The conservative bias comes out, for example, in the exegesis of Gn 6<sup>2</sup>, where the 'sons of God' are taken to mean those who serve God and obey Him, the mythological explanation being rejected; and the anti-critical bias is seen in the emphatic assertion that Gn 2<sup>4-3</sup> is *not* another account of Creation but the sequel of chap. 1.

The commentary is excellent, the notes only appear where they are really necessary, and they are usually brief, though, rightly enough, on important sections such as the Creation and the Fall of Man, or the Sacrifice of Isaac, there is a more elaborate discussion. The love of the Jew for his Scriptures shines everywhere through; the stories are 'of imperishable worth,' and on their severe impartiality the writer comments more than once. Five pages are given to the cantillation (with musical notation) of the Torah and the Prophets, and there are two useful coloured maps.

Of special interest are the Haftorahs appended to the book, whose full title is *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*. These are the Lessons from the Prophets recited immediately after the reading of the Law, and those for Genesis are taken from Deutero-Isaiah, Kings, Samuel, Hosea, Amos, Malachi, Obadiah, and Ezekiel. Here also text, translation, and commentary are offered. Emendations of the text are little considered. It is surprising, for example, to see 'pant after the dust of the earth,' etc., in Am 2<sup>7</sup> referred to the cupidity of the rich and powerful, when the true reading is almost certainly שָׁפִים (= שָׁפִים), not שָׁפִים. The typography has all the beauty and accuracy we are accustomed to associate with the Oxford University Press, except that Dr. Moffatt's name is always spelt with one t.

There is a characteristically Jewish discussion of 'Alleged Christological References in Scripture,' dealing with Gn 49<sup>10</sup>, Is 7<sup>14</sup>, and Is 53, but most modern Christian scholars would admit the justice of the argument. As an easy means of acquiring a knowledge of the Hebrew text of Genesis the



book may be commended to Christian as well as Jewish students.

### EDUCATION.

A book on the theory and practice of education by the Professor of Education at Edinburgh University ought to be both authoritative and valuable. And in a large degree this can be said of *A Modern Philosophy of Education*, by Professor Godfrey H. Thomson (Allen & Unwin; 8s. 6d. net). Dr. Thomson is not only a professor at the University, but he is head of the College for training teachers for their profession. So on all sides he is equipped to tell us what education is and ought to be. The motive of his book may be said to be the desire to make teachers think not only of methods but of principles, not only of acquiring skill, but also of the end at which they are striving. And as a matter of fact this is a book which teachers ought to read. There is a great deal for them to bite on, a good deal of philosophy, a good deal of science, of psychology, and even economics. And the writer is always interesting, even when he is not convincing. Perhaps he is too much afraid of conclusions. But even such a chapter as that on free will is useful though he does not lead us into a field of light.

The gravest defect of this book is its bland ignoring of religion as the main factor in education, as indeed its foundation. One would expect in a book on the philosophy of education at least a discussion on the question: Is religion the essential basis of any true education? At the very lowest the assertion that it is may be put forward as a possible view. It is, in fact, the view of very many educationists. And, if education is the development of personality, we can only regard an individual whose development has been on secular lines as, in the literal sense, a monster. Professor Thomson concludes that the aim of education is to teach men to do their duty. But what constraint is there behind this? *Why* should anything be my duty? In other words, why should I be a good man? There is no real answer to that question apart from a moral imperative which can alone be found in a Will.

### BIBLICAL DOCTRINES.

Arrangements have been made to publish in ten volumes the contributions to Theology of the late Professor Benjamin B. Warfield, of Princeton. The first volume, on 'Revelation and Inspiration,'

appeared two years ago; the second, on *Biblical Doctrines*, has just appeared (Milford; 18s. net). It is a huge tome of six hundred and sixty-five large pages, and it is obviously impossible, in a brief notice, to review such a book, dealing as it does with many different aspects of doctrine. There is the less need for a formal review, as all the chapters of which the book is composed have already appeared in one or other of the following dictionaries or magazines: The Presbyterian and Reformed Review, The Princeton Theological Review, The International Standard Bible Encyclopædia, Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, and The Expositor.

The following are the subjects dealt with: Predestination, The Foresight of Jesus, The Spirit of God in the Old Testament, The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity, The Person of Christ, 'God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,' The Christ that Paul Preached, Jesus' Mission according to His own Testimony (Synoptics), The New Testament Terminology of 'Redemption,' 'Redeemer' and 'Redemption,' Christ our Sacrifice, The Biblical Notion of 'Renewal,' The Biblical Doctrine of Faith, The Terminology of Love in the New Testament, The Prophecies of St. Paul, and The Millennium and the Apocalypse.

Some of these studies make rather heavy reading, and the mind behind them is a schematic mind; but whether we agree or disagree with the conclusions, of the massive learning behind them there cannot be the shadow of a doubt. And that learning is not confined to theology. Dr. Warfield makes occasional excursions—very competent, too—into linguistics, and he has much that is interesting and edifying to say on the history and usage of words like *λύτρον*, *πίστις*, *ἀγάπη*, etc. The conservative bias is evident in his description of Ps 51, as 'David's cry of penitence and prayer for mercy after Nathan's probing of his sin with Bathsheba.'

Technical as most of the discussions are, some of them could be read with ease and pleasure by the uninitiated layman, especially that on the Mission of Jesus. Of particular value is the chapter on the Terminology of Love, where there are elaborate discussions of *ἐρᾶν*, *φιλεῖν*, *ἀγαπᾶν*, and *στέργειν*. But the writer is at his best in the chapter on Redeemer and Redemption, which was first delivered as an address in Miller Chapel, Princeton Theological Seminary. There he reveals his inmost heart.



*The Renewal of Culture*, translated from the Swedish of Lars Ringbom (Allen & Unwin ; 7s. 6d. net), is a biological study of human society of a somewhat doctrinaire type. Treating civilization as an organism moulded by forces, particularly the individualist and the collectivist, the writer maintains that at the present moment human freedom is threatened by the dominance of the collectivist influence. He criticises, however, Spengler's pessimism in regard to the future of European culture, and looks hopefully to the Nordic race for an era of renewal. Whatever one may think of his general theory, it must be acknowledged that the writer is a thoughtful student of modern social life and has many incisive observations to make upon present-day tendencies.

Mr. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, has published at 1s. net a review by Archdeacon W. L. Paige Cox, M.A., B.D., of the Bible doctrine of *The Heavenly Priesthood of our Lord*, with special reference to recent developments in teaching and ritual. Mr. Cox is grieved and alarmed at the beliefs and practices which have given the sacrament of the Holy Communion a character not far removed from that of the Mass. He shows that, partly through Vulgate mistranslations, and partly through the revival of pagan conceptions of deity, the sublime teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews in particular, and of the New Testament in general, has been not only obscured but distorted. That teaching is that Jesus offered Himself once for all. A doctrine widely prevalent to-day is that He is continually offering Himself, and that the Sacrament of the Holy Communion is the earthly counterpart of that offering. This doctrine, besides introducing grave internal controversy into the Church of England, would, as Dr. Vernon Bartlet says, 'add an insuperable hindrance to reunion for Evangelical Non-conformists.' Mr. Cox's brochure, which is a reasoned and moving protest against this doctrine, is a truly timely utterance.

From an MS. in the Bodleian Dr. H. G. Enelow has published the Preface and the first of twenty chapters which constitute the *Menorat Ha-Maor* (The Lamp of Illumination), by R. Israel ibn Al-Nakawa (The Bloch Publishing Company, New York ; \$3.00). Al-Nakawa, who lived through persecutions of the Jews in Spain in the latter half of the fourteenth century and perished in the massacre of 1391, wrote his book in order to give enlightenment and religious stimulus and instruction to the sorely harassed representatives of the

Jewish faith. The Preface and first chapter, in Hebrew, are here beautifully printed from a photograph of the only surviving MS., which Dr. Enelow has accompanied with a valuable introduction dealing with the antecedents and influence of Al-Nakawa's work, and sketching with some detail the contents of the first chapter, whose theme is Charity. The chapter is full of tender thought and practical wisdom ; and if the other chapters are as fine, we agree with Dr. Enelow that the work of this saintly martyr to the faith of Israel deserves to be better known.

In *Studies in Eusebius* (Cambridge University Press ; 6s. net), Mr. J. Stevenson publishes the Thirlwall Prize Essay for 1927. After an Introduction dealing with the City and Church of Cæsarea until the time of Eusebius, the essayist proceeds to discuss two periods of Eusebius' life. The first period is his life to the end of the Great Persecution. Here are discussed in particular the influence of Pamphilus, his teacher, upon Eusebius, the discrepancies between the 'Chronicle' and the 'Church History,' and the movements of Eusebius in the persecution. Other earlier works of Eusebius than the 'Chronicle' are also tabulated, with stress laid upon their importance as collections of material utilized in the greater works. The second period treated is Eusebius' life as associated with the Arian controversy. The relation of the thought of Eusebius to that of Origen and also to that of Arius is traced in intimate detail and with much learning. The actions of Eusebius at the Council of Nicæa are set forth and discussed, as also the subsequent Arian attack upon the Catholic leaders. The essayist seeks to show that in his works Eusebius did not by any means go the whole way with the Arians, but that he was with them in all their acts after the Council of Nicæa. If at Nicæa he was carried away by his desire for peace and by the influence of the Emperor, after Nicæa he was carried away by his friends.

In *Primitive Christian Application of the Doctrine of the Servant* (Cambridge University Press ; 11s. 6d. net), Professor L. L. Carpenter, Ph.D., of Furman University, has traced the idea of the Servant from the four Servant songs in Deutero-Isaiah, of which he gives an excellent sketch, and the few Old Testament passages affected by them, through the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the Talmud and Rabbinical literature, the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers.

While his careful discussion of the individual and



collective interpretation of the Songs leads him to the conclusion that, 'despite the features which seem so strongly to point to a person, we should accept the identification of the Servant in some sense with Israel,' he repeatedly emphasizes that the real fulfilment of the ideal there set forth is only to be found in Jesus. He makes the point that the idea of a suffering and dying Messiah, although it was familiar to certain circles of Judaism in the second century A.D., was on the whole quite foreign to Judaism in general. Jesus, however, unquestionably applied the idea to Himself; and although He is called the *παῖς* (Servant) very much more rarely in the New Testament than we might have expected, most of that literature is saturated with the idea. The origin of the doctrine as applied to Jesus was due primarily to Peter; but the Servant doctrine seems to have been early dislodged from Christian thought and literature, under the influence of the higher Christology, in which Jesus was thought of under the titles 'Son of God' and 'Lord,' titles which in any case were more congenial to the Hellenistic world. Professor Allen H. Godbey, Ph.D., writes a curious and suggestive introduction which sets some aspects of Hebrew religion in a fresh light. 'Philemon' is twice written mistakenly for 'Philippians' (pp. xv and 34). It is a pity that so useful a book, which consists of only one hundred and eighty-five pages, should be sold at a price practically prohibitive to most of those who would gladly read it and who are qualified to profit by it.

Those who read that startling and seemingly sensational book 'Mother India' by Miss Katherine Mayo will be the first to turn to what we may term its sequel—*Slaves of the Gods* (Cape; 7s. 6d. net)—in which the writer, with all her intimate knowledge and vivid power of descriptive narrative, makes a thorough exposure of the cruelties and inhumanity associated with the child marriages and child widows of the religious system of the Hindus. The book may be said to have as its preface a letter from the Right Rev. H. Whitehead, for twenty-three years Bishop of the great diocese of Madras, giving his impressions after reading 'Mother India.' He admits that during his forty years' experience in India he came to know all the moral and social evils described by Miss Mayo. His only criticism was that the connexion of those evils with Hindu religious ideas was not 'more strongly emphasized.' In the twelve most graphic sketches contained in this volume Miss Mayo has answered that criticism. The facts, she says, 'are taken from real life' among

the Hindu outcastes. What Miss Mayo has done is to give her readers a narrative so graphic and appalling as to be almost repellent. She makes us ask ourselves: After all these years of Christian Missions and British rule, how is it that these atrocities still persist in the name and at the foundation of Hindu religion? In the name of that religion the appalling cruelties of compulsory child marriage, child prostitution, and child widows are being maintained, though in these days against an ever-growing protest in India itself. Miss Mayo quotes the opinions of many leaders of Indian opinion during the last two years since this system of child marriages has been publicly debated and denounced in provincial legislative councils and in the Legislative Assembly. These graphic sketches will not only shock but educate public opinion in this country and throughout America.

When Professor Sayce, as far back as 1888, published his story of the forgotten Hittite Empire, there were only a few scattered archæological fragments in existence relating to the subject. Since then Dr. Winckler has recovered the royal Hittite libraries from the ruins near Boghaz-Keui in Asia Minor, and Dr. F. Hrozny has demonstrated the Indo-European affinities of the official Hittite language. The time seems thus to have come for presenting to scholars and others a new and more complete history of this ancient Empire. This has now been done by Professor John Garstang, of the University of Liverpool, in his volume *The Hittite Empire*, being a survey of the history, geography, and monuments of Hittite Asia Minor and Syria, with maps, plans, and illustrations (Constable; 25s. net). The work is modelled on his former book, 'The Land of the Hittites,' issued in 1910, but contains a completely new presentation of facts, due to the thousands of Hittite State archives and other documents which are now available, and which may be said to fill the whole gap in the history of Asia Minor between the rise of Babylonia and the fall of Troy (2200-1200 B.C.). It hardly needs to be said that Professor Garstang, who was present at Boghaz-Keui when Winckler made his epoch-making discovery, and who recognized with him the great value of the records (which are partly contemporaneous with those of Tell-el-Amarna), shows profound knowledge of the subject and special ability in his presentation of it to the reader. No other scholar has kept closer pace with the new progress of Hittite studies or has more acquaintance with the continuous series of Hittite texts translated within recent years. The volume



not only gives an historical outline of the Hittite world, but has much to say of the land and city of Hatti, the numerous Hittite monuments (to which there is an excellent index), the cities of northern Syria, and other interesting matters. Apart from the fact that there are many references in the Old Testament to the Hittites, the book is of value to the Biblical student owing to the mass of information which it gives on Old Testament times and races, and its description of Hittite religious practices. The maps are particularly good, and throw much light on Asia Minor and Syria in the second millennium B.C.

There is at present a marked desire on the part of many people to tell the stories of the Bible over again in 'plain language.' Mr. Walter de la Mare has attempted the feat, with unequal success. And he is only one of a large company. Miss Katharine L. Macpherson is another. She goes over the story from the Flood to the death of Moses in her book *In Days of Old* (Dorrance, Philadelphia; \$2.00). It is difficult to say whether such a book as this is of any use. It can hardly be for children, for the language is not simple enough. And adults hardly need what the writer gives us here. Miss Macpherson will gratify some readers by her orthodoxy, but it is questionable whether she has made the Old Testament any more vivid than it is in a good version.

In *Some Chapters of European Baptist History* (Kingsgate Press; 2s. 6d. net), Dr. J. H. Rushbrooke has briefly told the story of a century's growth of Baptist churches throughout the Continent. It is a story of remarkable progress which points to the hope of greater things to follow. Evangelical Christians will find in it a welcome evidence of the power of the gospel to win victories in lands and among peoples that have too readily been regarded as hopeless and spiritually dead.

In *The Bandler of Righteousness: An Ethiopian Book of the Dead* (Luzac; 21s.), being volume xix. of the 'Semitic Text and Translation' Series, we have the text in facsimile (covering sixty-three plates) of a small Ethiopian work. It has been taken from two manuscripts in the British Museum, and is here edited with an English translation by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, the well-known Egyptologist. The Ethiopian Christian had a passionate desire for immortality, but as he had not sufficient faith to expect the gift from Christ, he was in the habit of appealing to the magicians for it. The

little work referred to is an answer to this appeal, and was composed by some one who was skilful in fusing Christianity with paganism in such a way that any one would regard the composition as a Christian one. It obtained a great vogue, because it was considered to be the most powerful collection of magical texts then known. Sir Wallis Budge traces the origin of the magical element to Egypt. The book is interesting to the Biblical student as throwing much light on the nature of Christianity in Ethiopia after A.D. 350, when the Cross took the place of the crescent there. The people of non-Jewish origin seem to have never wholly abandoned paganism. Incidentally, Sir Wallis has much to say on the seal of Solomon, the use of palindromes, and similar matters. The translation, as one would expect from such an outstanding Egyptian scholar, is well done, and the book is worthy of a place in the well-known Semitic Series.

A new edition, edited by Mr. J. Macmaster Campbell, C.B.E., of *The Literature of the Highlanders*, by Mr. Nigel Macneill, LL.D., first published in 1892 and republished in 1898 and long since out of print, has now been issued (E. Mackay, Stirling; 7s. 6d. net). This is a handsome and handy volume, beautifully printed. Dr. Macneill, a native of Islay, was an enthusiastic student and voluminous writer on Gaelic literature. He had something of the fervour of Professor Blackie. The feature of this book is the wealth it contains of English translations of Gaelic poetry and in which the translator has succeeded in preserving the spirit and merit of the originals. This edition, like its predecessors, ought in its turn to be exhausted.

*Methods of Private Religious Living*, by Mr. Henry N. Wieman (Macmillan; 7s. 6d. net), is a typically American production. It sets forth the most approved and up-to-date principles according to which the worship of God may be organized and carried through. It does not matter what your idea of God is. 'One can think of this all-encompassing reality as atoms, if he wishes, or electric tension, or use some other imagery.' The all-important thing is to get into tune with the universe, and here are given the most business-like methods for attaining that end. One is left with the feeling that the real depths of the situation are still unplumbed, and that no conclusive reason is shown why men should submit themselves to this mental regimen. At the same time it must freely be acknowledged that religious souls may find here

many useful hints for the more methodical ordering of the inner life.

*The Incarnation and the Church*, by the Rev. John Douglas, M.A. (Melrose; 2s. net), contains a series of talks given to students of the Women's Missionary College, Edinburgh. Its main thesis is that the Incarnation of God, foreshadowed in nature and prophecy and fulfilled in Christ, is by His Spirit continued in the Church which is His body, and which is therefore charged with His ministry of fellowship and reconciliation. The treatment is scriptural, devout, and practical.

In *Jesus and Youth: A World-Study of Jesus Christ*, by the Rev. Basil Mathews, M.A. (Pilgrim Press; 2s. 6d. net), we have the second volume of a series of studies on the life and teaching of our Lord. Each contains complete materials for a lesson on some aspect of the subject. In this volume there are contained sections 3 ('Fire upon Earth') and 4 ('Creative Love'), and in each section there are thirteen 'studies.' The plan is as follows: First there is a narrative of the incident (or, in the case of teaching, the background), very well filled with the necessary detail. This is confronted with the modern parallel, and the lesson pointed. Then certain questions 'for reflection and discussion' are given, and these are extraordinarily suggestive and well selected. Finally, there are daily Bible readings that shed light on the subject from various angles. It will be apparent that the method is familiar. It is also well tried and approved, and, when it is competently done, exceedingly useful. The present outlines are described as for 'young adolescents,' and our only criticism is that now and again one feels that the adolescent must be uncommonly intelligent to handle the matters suggested. With this deduction, we cordially commend them as a most admirable guide to the study of the Gospels.

*The Man, Christ Jesus*, by the Rev. J. Lamond, D.D. (Simpkin Marshall; 3s. 6d. net), is a devout and thoughtful study of the gospel records of the life and death of Jesus Christ. The work is coloured by the fact that the writer has been a lifelong student of theosophical and spiritualistic literature, and is obviously to some extent influenced by it. He devotes considerable space to refuting the idea put forward by a section of spiritualists that Jesus is a myth. On the other hand he apparently accepts Miss Cummins' 'Script of Cleophas' as an authentic spirit message supplementing the Acts

of the Apostles. These things, however, are not unduly obtruded, and the whole study is the work of a warm-hearted follower of Jesus.

Dr. Edward L. Cutts's *Turning-Points of General Church History* has been condensed and revised by the Rev. William C. Piercy, M.A. (S.P.C.K.; 6s. net). First published in 1877, Cutts's 'Turning-Points' has commanded a good sale, and many will no doubt welcome this new edition. The book is a summary history of the Church of Christ, and includes useful sketches of the contemporary secular history. Though summary in its main character, it is relieved now and then by the inclusion of concrete and sometimes even picturesque detail. It may be noted that the Episcopal theory of Church constitution is defended, and the distinctive claims of the Papacy refuted. And it should be added that the story of the Church is not carried beyond the Reformation. Dr. Cutts had a final chapter on 'The Present State of the Catholic Church.' This, which was necessarily out of date, has been omitted; but the result is that the book comes somewhat abruptly to its conclusion.

Miss Ursula Wells, S.Th., has written a useful little book, which is well fitted to introduce junior students to the modern study of the Old Testament. It is entitled *Pioneer Prophets* (S.P.C.K.; 3s. 6d. cloth, 2s. 6d. limp), and deals briefly, but pointedly, with Moses, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Micaiah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea. The point of view is unabashedly modern. Of the 'miracles' in the Elijah story, we are told, for example, that 'to accept these stories as the exact report of the actual occurrences is frankly against our reason and experience,' and of the Elisha stories, that 'the spiritual message is not dependent on the historical accuracy.' In discussing the great Carmel scene the writer skates skilfully on thin ice. Particularly attractive is her sketch of Amos, which is indeed very vividly done; but each chapter in its own way contributes to a living picture of the development of Hebrew history and religious thought from Moses to Hosea. For 'judgment' when paralleled with 'righteousness,' it would be well to substitute the 'justice' of the American R.V. 'Jasher' on p. xiii and 'Nazarites' on pp. 118, 123 should be 'Jashar' and 'Nazirites.'

*The Metaphysical Justification of Religion*, by Principal Robert S. Franks, M.A., D.Litt., Hon. LL.D. (University of London Press; 3s. 6d. net), is the somewhat formidable title of a really excellent



little book, a book distinguished by great freshness of thought and clearness of exposition. Beginning at the familiar starting-point of religious experience, the writer goes on to argue that a purely psychological analysis of that experience is not enough. The question presses as to what of reality is behind the experience, and this leads to a metaphysical inquiry. Dealing with Schleiermacher, 'the author of the experimental method in modern theology,' Dr. Franks shows that 'his design to build a theological system upon the ground of religious experience was by no means guided by the idea that the psychology of religion is a sufficient starting-point for theology. *Schleiermacher's psychology of religion had a metaphysical basis*' which is set forth in his less known 'Dialectics' and 'Ethics.' There follows a singularly suggestive treatment of the eternal values from which the conclusion is ultimately reached that 'the Holy is the fundamental ground of the Universe, from which, as various aspects of its Being, the True, the Good, and the Beautiful are all derived. It is the central luminary: they are the dependent suns. The constellation of the Values centres in the Holy; and is expanded in the True, the Beautiful, and the Good.' And if we endeavour to inquire further as to this ultimate Unity of the Universe it is found to have 'its nearest analogy in the ultimate unity of our own personality.'

In *A Critical Analysis of the Four Chief Pauline Epistles* (Watts & Co.; 12s. 6d. net), Mr. L. Gordon Rylands, B.A., B.Sc., catches up some of the positions of his previous volume on 'The Evolution of Christianity,' aligning himself with the opinions as to the origin of Christianity held by Drews, J. M. Robertson, and others. Like those writers, he makes much in this connexion of the Christ-myth said to have been prevalent in the Apostolic Age in the world of Hellenic or Gnostic thought; but whereas the tendency of the exponents of mystical idealism has been to emphasize the place of St. Paul in the origination and development of Christian dogma and in the foundation of the Christian Church, this writer regards the St. Paul of tradition as a composite figure, ascribing to the real Paul the advocacy of the primitive Gnostic type of Christianity, and to the other sitters for the

portrait of Paul the advocacy of the Judaic and Catholic type which finally became predominant.

'The fundamental distinction,' it is explained, 'between Judaic and Catholic doctrine on the one hand and Gnostic on the other is that according to the former redemption is achieved by the expiatory sacrifice of the Redeemer, while in the latter men are held to be redeemed through the knowledge of God and of His plan of salvation (gnosis) brought to them by a Christ who may or may not have been regarded as the Son of God, but whose principal features were developed from the hypostatized Word of God (Logos) and Wisdom (Sophia) of the Wisdom literature.'

Incidentally Mr. Rylands claims to have presented a greater and more pleasing Paul than the tradition has given us, though he is quite cognizant of the fact that this is achieved through a reduction of the great Apostle to a shadowy figure of history. It is his conviction, however, that 'the man who was at once harsh, domineering, and overflowing with love, arrogant, boastful, and yet modest, the propagator of doctrines so fundamentally irreconcilable that they cannot possibly have originated in one mind, is a monstrous fiction.'

Into Mr. Rylands' analysis of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians we cannot here enter, but we should say that in our opinion he over-stresses differences in literary style, and that his results, speaking generally, while showing the workings of an able and scholarly mind, are the outcome of too much critical ingenuity.

Every sincere effort to appreciate St. Paul is welcome. There have been some really fine books of this kind in the last few years. But even commonplace essays are useful, and one of these is *Paul the Man: His Life and Ministry*, by the Rev. Clarence E. Macartney, D.D. (Williams & Norgate; 5s. net). It is purely biographical, and leaves theology alone. But in regard to the life, it is both a full and intelligent narrative. Dr. Macartney has read carefully, not only the Acts and Epistles, but much of the literature based on these. There is an earnest spirit in the book, and any reader who desires, in fairly brief compass, a reliable account of Paul which leaves out nothing of moment will find it here.

## Symbolism in the Old and New Testaments.

BY THE REVEREND CANON BINDLEY, D.D., DENTON, NORFOLK.

RECENT study of the apocalyptic literature of the century and a half before Christ has shown that a great deal of what had usually been considered eschatological language in the New Testament is not eschatological at all, but merely stereotyped and conventional symbolism common to the later prophetic and extra-canonical writers. There was a rather large body of floating apocalyptic symbolic thought and phrase, which rose to the lips without any very close relevancy to immediate circumstances whenever the unexpected or startling was predicted or described. There is a similarity of metaphor and of phrase which shows that such figures of speech had worked themselves into the texture of ordinary thought, so that the language could be used, and would be understood as being used, in a purely symbolic sense. For instance, celestial portents are of such a nature as always to arrest attention most signally; and conversely, by a figure of speech, anything that signally arrests attention could be symbolized in terms of celestial portents. When a vulgar person ejaculates 'Thunder!' as an expression of great astonishment, he is not calling attention to an electrical disturbance in the clouds; he is merely using a symbol which connotes a startling surprise.

I want to examine a few examples of symbolism in the Old and New Testaments which, I believe, have been much misunderstood. We have to be on our guard always lest our Western matter-of-fact, prosaic literalness lead us astray when estimating facts portrayed under the forms of Oriental symbolism and poetry. We Westerns lack the rich imaginativeness of the Easterns. Our love of literalism hinders the play of the imagination, because we invariably want to materialize a mental picture presented for our contemplation. Take as an example the symbolic description of the Son of Man in the Apocalypse (Rev 1<sup>31</sup>).—eyes a flame of fire, feet like brass, seven stars held in the right hand, a sword proceeding out of the mouth. You cannot depict it on canvas without producing a monstrosity: it is not a picture, it is symbolism.

The light and the sun are the chief sources of life and joy; and anything which interferes with the regular supply of light is a real catastrophe; hence physical and mental horrors could, in primitive symbolism, very naturally be described as the

darkening of the sun and moon. Conversely, the portrayal of a time of great joy was represented by the figures of the moon's light equalling that of the sun, and of the sun's light being sevenfold multiplied, or of light continuing throughout eventime, or of there being no night at all (Is 30<sup>26</sup>, Zec 14<sup>7</sup>, Rev 21<sup>26</sup>). Instances of catastrophes symbolically delineated occur in several of the prophets. Isaiah wishes to describe the day of Babylon's capture by the Medes. This is how he does it (13<sup>9, 10</sup>): 'Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, with wrath and fierce anger. . . The stars shall not give their light, the sun shall be darkened . . . and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.' Similarly Ezekiel describes the devastation of Egypt by Babylonia (32<sup>7, 8</sup>): 'When I shall extinguish thee, I will cover the heaven and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land.' Exactly the same language is used by Joel to describe a plague of locusts (2<sup>1, 10, 11</sup>): 'The day of the Lord cometh . . . the earth quaketh, the heavens tremble: the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining: for the day of the Lord is very terrible.' And in the same chapter he uses precisely the same language to describe an exceptional outpouring of God's spirit upon all flesh (vv. 28<sup>f</sup>). Once more, the same prophet when speaking of the judgment of the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat (3<sup>14-16</sup>) says: 'The day of the Lord is near . . . the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining . . . and the heavens and the earth shall shake.' The point to be observed is that four totally distinct kinds of overwhelming events are all depicted under the same imagery derived from fearful portents in the sky. First, Babylon's capture by the Medes and Egypt's overthrow by Babylonia; secondly, Palestine ravaged by locusts; thirdly, the Grand Assize of the nations; and lastly, an exceptional outpouring of inspirational gifts. This shows that that kind of language was purely conventional, and was no more meant to be taken literally than the exclamation 'Thunder!' of an astonished person to-day. The unscientific mind, like the mind of a Central African now, was terror-struck by an eclipse, which interfered with



the regular and unbroken course of daylight, and that feeling riveted itself into ordinary speech for any startling occurrence.

The language used by the author of *The Assumption of Moses*—that Pharisee quietist who was an exact contemporary of our Lord—in depicting the Coming of God's Kingdom and the vindication of the righteous, is evidently drawn from the same sources as that of the prophets:

Then shall His Kingdom appear throughout His whole creation. . . .

For the Heavenly One shall arise from the throne of His Kingdom

And shall come forth from His Holy Habitation With indignation and wrath on account of His children.

And the earth shall tremble, even to its bounds shall it be shaken ;

And the lofty mountains shall be brought low,

And the hills shall be shaken and fall.

The sun shall not give her light,

And the horns of the moon shall be turned into darkness and be broken,

And the whole of the moon shall be turned into blood,

And the orbit of the stars shall be disordered,

And the sea shall fall into the abyss.

How favourite was the use of these apocalyptic symbols of celestial portents is seen by their re-appearance in the reports of Christ's discourse on the end of the Jewish era in the destruction of Jerusalem. 'The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers in the heavens shall be shaken ; and then shall they see the Son of man coming in clouds' (Mk 13<sup>24f.</sup>, Mt 24<sup>29</sup>, Lk 21<sup>25</sup>). And this end of an era was to happen in the lifetime of His hearers : 'Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled.' Failure to recognize apocalyptic symbolism in these expressions has led to much dishonest exegesis in the commentators and to very much misunderstanding and terror on the part of ordinary readers. The same symbolism reappears in Rev 6<sup>12</sup> : 'There was a great earthquake ; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood ; and the stars of the heaven fell . . . and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.'

We may say that præternatural cosmic phenomena form part of the ordinary accompaniments of any description of a Day of Yahweh. They even seemed natural to Joel when he spoke of an extraordinary outpouring of spiritual gifts. So it does not surprise us to find St. Peter employing

Joel's language on the Day of Pentecost to explain the startling nature of the occurrence. But no one can imagine the most devout, spiritual, and enthusiastically religious European describing the Descent of the Holy Spirit as :

'Wonders in the heaven above,  
And signs on the earth beneath ;  
Blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke :  
The sun shall be turned into darkness  
And the moon into blood,  
Before the Day of the Lord come'

(Ac 2<sup>19, 20</sup>).

And yet that kind of phraseology rose quite naturally to St. Peter's lips. The sun going black and the moon swooning in blood-red eclipse are not statements of fact in prose, they are merely poetic symbolism of something portentous, startling, unusual.

No one, I suppose, would interpret Lk 10<sup>18</sup> other than symbolically. When the Seventy, on their return, related their power over demons, Christ said, 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.' Here it is generally recognized that under a picturesque symbolic phrase He was announcing the defeat of the powers of evil and the certainty of their ultimate downfall, the promise and earnest of which He saw in His disciples' success. But the symbolism in another passage has not been so readily admitted. When our Lord said to the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, 'I say unto you that from this moment (*ἀπ' ἄρτι*, Mt 26<sup>64</sup> ; *ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν*, Lk 22<sup>69</sup>) ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven,' He was obviously not speaking at all of some dread day in the future—the words *ἀπ' ἄρτι* forbid such an interpretation—but He was quoting the exact words of Dn 7<sup>13</sup>, which portrayed the Judgment on the world-powers and the ushering in of the universal and everlasting Kingdom of the Saints of God. That is to say, He was employing perfectly well-known apocalyptic language to announce what His hearers would perfectly well understand meant their own speedy doom. Their judgment and His Kingdom, in this aspect of it, began from that moment. Indeed, it is quite clear from Mk 13<sup>24</sup>, Mt 24<sup>29</sup>, Lk 21<sup>27</sup>, that phrases such as 'the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light' ; 'the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken' ; and, more especially, 'the Coming of the Son of Man' are simply symbolic expressions for the end of one era and the beginning of a new one. St. Peter's use of some of these phrases of the Descent of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost proves how utterly

mistaken we are in understanding such portents as referring to some distant day at the end of the world. There is nothing in what is called our Lord's eschatological discourse which even hints at an end of the world. Everything that is said there can be explained of the abolition of the Jewish polity in the destruction of Jerusalem. And if this be so, it is clear why the Fourth Gospel has preserved no reminiscence of this discourse. When that Gospel was written Jerusalem had fallen;

the Holy City was no longer the centre of Jewish (or even of Christian) life, and therefore no report of Christ's words on the subject was any longer needed. The crisis had passed. But had those words contained any prediction or warnings about a final Judgment or an end of the world, the case would have been quite otherwise. We should have expected the writer to hand them on. For the author of this Gospel evidently the 'Coming' was to be understood in a spiritual sense.

## In the Study.

### *Virginibus Puerisque.*

#### Scouting for the Harbour.

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM MAXWELL, M.A.,  
MONTROSE.

'I will guide thee with mine eye.'—Ps 32<sup>d</sup>.

THE Scout Movement has captured the imagination of the world in a wonderful way. The Jamboree at Birkenhead has focused attention on its far-reaching influence. Each nation has revealed how scouting can fit into its own natural customs, and all together have revealed in action that spirit which surmounts barriers of race and class; which laughs at difficulties; which defies hardships and 'smiles' through all.

What is the secret? Scouting is a game—the greatest of all games—the game of life. Every field is a playing field. Every circumstance gives a call to play the game. Every difficulty tests the boy's physical, mental, and moral nature. Every patrol movement brings him into line to play his part in the great game. Take the simple game of 'Blindfold Drill.'

Every scout who knows the game of 'Blindfold Drill' soon discovers how hopeless his chances are of keeping in line or making progress towards the desired goal.

The long line is drawn up in perfect formation. Each scout from the properly dressed line looks straight ahead, ready for the call to advance. Then eyes are closed. Commands are issued 'Advance,' 'Right Turn,' 'Left Turn,' 'About Turn,' 'Steady.' So the orders go in any order and in quick succession. Every order is obeyed with precision. Two minutes pass in movement.

Then 'Eyes Open!' and behold you are here, while your 'Second' is yonder, and your 'Third' is nowhere within reach. Some face each other. Others have their backs to each other. Some are even in danger of falling into the ditch or the camp fire. No one is in the way of reaching the proper goal. No one could believe that the troop had been in perfect formation. Yet they have listened to orders. They have turned at the summons. They have advanced straight forward when left to do so. But in spite of their obedience they are hopelessly lost.

That is life. It is pretty much 'blindfold drill.' We obey. We turn. We advance. We do our best. But we don't get there. How the Israelites wandered in the wilderness! They turned. They halted. They marched. They came to Massah and Meribah, Sinai and everywhere, and anywhere except to the promised land. Obedience is not enough if the eyes are closed. But the eyes are always closed. We never know what a new turn will reveal or a new step bring us to. Life is not a walk by sight, but by trust in One who knows whither we are going and can lead us in the true way.

The Scouts have another game called 'The Hidden Harbour.' That harbour is pointed out to them as their goal. One of their own number is chosen to take up the position from which he can survey the whole ocean. His voice is sounded often enough to make each scout familiar with it. Then single file is the order; each scout holding on to the belt of the one in front. All are blindfolded. The order is given, 'March!' Then the pilot takes command. 'Steady!' and forward they go in the straight course. 'Port!' and they turn to the



left. 'Starboard!' and they turn to the right. Thus the line moves, diverges to right or left according to rocks, shallows, or traffic on the same route. Ever onward they sail. Ever nearer they come, and at last they turn right into the desired haven. It is the work of the pilot. He has guided them with his eye set on them, the way, and the harbour.

There is something very very like this in life. The One who occupies the position of eminence knows the way, watches the traffic, sees the dangers, issues the orders, and in an unknown way we go onward and forward to our desired haven. 'I will guide thee with mine eye.'

### The Invisible Beam.

BY THE REVEREND S. GREER, M.A., AYR.

'He [Christ] hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.'—Ac 2<sup>30</sup>.

Here is a detective story, such as boys love, and girls sit up very late at night to finish. He was a very mysterious sleuth, for nobody had ever really seen his face. Always he was lurking in concealment, his eye upon everybody. They had him lately at a London exhibition to guard a collection of valuable silver, and trusted him so much that they didn't even bother to put it behind steel bars or in plate-glass cases. People could see nothing between them and all those precious things. But there was. Let anybody just stretch out his hand to touch or take, and instantly—such a clamour of electric bells rung by that invisible detective! Never had valuables been so well guarded by steel safe or padlock as by that invisible wireless beam, which, when you passed your hand through it, set all the alarms ringing, yet there was nothing to be seen!

What wonders a wireless beam can perform! One day it will cook our dinner, and heat and light our home, and stand like a sentinel at our gate. It just walks through doors and walls as though they weren't there. You don't understand? Well, neither do I. Fortunately there are things you don't need to understand before you try them. The last Sultan of Turkey didn't believe in electricity, and wouldn't have it in his palace. Now, how could you ever explain wireless or anything to a man like that? Some things you must try first and explain afterwards—like Religion.

Once, long ago, strange things began to happen in Palestine. Curious changes were seen in people whom everybody knew. Folk who had been fierce and cruel became courteous and kind. Timid,

gentle people grew as strong and brave as lions. Men who before had been going all wrong, began suddenly to go all right. Nobody could account for it but those who tried it, and *they* said it was a beam from Above: 'Christ hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.' . . . And some folk think of Jesus as dead, when the same wonders are happening every day. A young man once said to me: 'I can't explain it, but if I put out my hand to do a mean or selfish thing, it is as if some one gripped me by the sleeve.' An invisible beam from Jesus!

'*Noblesse oblige*' is a fine motto from the days of knights. Because they were knights they must be chivalrous, and upright, and risk their lives for something that is bigger than life. 'What obliges them?' you ask. And the answer is '*Noblesse*' (nobility) obliges them—and us. It is not anything they or we can see, but something we can feel, and must respond to, or forever despise ourselves.

What a protection that Invisible Guard is for the precious things in life—for truth and honour! When you're in danger of losing them—and to lose honour is to lose all—what a clamour of warning bells in our heart! You feel you can't speak that untruth, or do a low-down thing. You may put out your hand to do it, but there's a grip on your sleeve. 'I *can't* do this thing,' you murmur. That is, if you have made Christ your Friend.

### The Christian Year.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

#### The Excellent Curiosity.

'He tried to see what Jesus was like.'—Lk 19<sup>3</sup> (Moffatt's translation).

Our familiarity with the story of Zacchæus, as narrated in the Third Gospel, probably hides from us the awkwardness and opaqueness in the translation of the opening sentence: 'He sought to see Jesus, who he was.' Dr. Moffatt's change is simple, but it is sufficient to freshen our impression of one of the most captivating of gospel stories. 'He tried to see what Jesus was like,' puts us in possession of a very vivid picture of this tax-gatherer of the town of Jericho.

1. Consider *the things which quicken men to an interest in Christ*. How came this man to be interested at all in this passing Rabbi? What knowledge had he beforehand that so kindled his curiosity and made him so keen and determined to set his eyes on the Passer-by?

A suggestion is made which may hold a clue.

We know that tax-gatherers were shunned, and were forced to seek society among their own class. They thus drew to one another and knew one another well, though stationed in different districts. Our Lord's coming to Jericho had been prepared for in an unusual way. Two of the seventy followers, whom He sent in advance to prepare for His coming, had been before Him in Jericho. It is possible that one of these two was Matthew, that tax-gatherer whose conversion had caused so great a stir in Capernaum. If so, one may be sure that Matthew and Zacchæus had talk together, and probably it was thus that Zacchæus knew that Jesus might be expected to pass that way.

He knew, then, something about Jesus which came home to him closely. A man very like himself, engaged in the same calling, despised and hated as he was, entangled in the shady things inseparable from an office which farmed taxes, such a man, whom Zacchæus knew, had been so taken with Jesus that he had put everything down and followed Him. 'I must see this Rabbi,' said Zacchæus of Jericho. One who can cause a tax-gatherer to give up his office and forsake his commissions must have something about him worth observing. Many are the things which draw men to an interest in Christ, and every man from his own point of view. Curiosity is one of the gates at which the trumpeter of the Spirit sounds his summons.

This is a speculation that the converted publican of Capernaum awoke an interest in Jesus in the publican of Jericho. Whether it be a likely thing to have happened or unlikely, it is certainly true that in this way many are aroused to an interest in Christ. They are not taken with doctrines and dogmas, and theological discussions leave them cold. But when one day they encounter a man they know, and find he is changed—a man much as they are, with the same kind of life to live, under much the same besetments, burdens, or circumstances, but now made into a new man—they are not so dull that no interest is quickened in One who is reputed to be responsible for the change.

There are to be found, and that readily, men and women who are still strugglers, many of them 'old strugglers,' as Samuel Johnson confessed himself to the beggar-woman in the market, who are still consciously unworthy of their Lord, but who have been changed—changed in mind, changed in motive, changed in all the things which determined the quality of life and the issues of it, and who with one consent ascribe this to Christ and what He has wrought in and with them. And through these

an old challenge flings itself out again: 'If I, by the finger of God, cast out devils, is not the kingdom of God come among you?'

2. Consider the hindrances men meet in their desire to see what Jesus is like. 'He could not for the crowd.' A crowd of people may not interfere with our physical vision, while it can gravely affect and hinder that other and deeper seeing which we call our judgment. It can affect our estimates, and there are many things we should see more clearly if other people did not get in our way.

How was it possible for Zacchæus to take with him an unbiased judgment when he sought to see what Jesus was like? There were two hindrances. There was first the opinion which Zacchæus knew these people had formed of him. It was a bad opinion, and Zacchæus had good cause to know it. See how inevitably this must react upon his mind with regard to all men. It will set the standard of his expectations about Jesus. If he should meet the eyes of Jesus, would they not darken with the same antipathy Zacchæus had learned to expect when he encountered the gaze of his fellows?

Secondly, there was the opinion which Zacchæus had of the crowd. He had taken the measure of these people. No one knew better than he the sinister side of human nature as it was to be found in Jericho.

Can we suppose, then, that a man with such an estimate of human nature was in any fit way to take a true impression of Jesus?

Here is an old difficulty men have in seeing what Jesus is like. Their contact with the world has spoiled their capacities and dulled their expectations, so that it is hard for them to see or hear One new and unique among the sons of men.

Though it takes us for a moment away from the case of Zacchæus, there is another aspect and development to-day of the hindrance the crowd may offer to the apprehension of Jesus and a just estimate of Him. The believing and devout get between men and the real sight of Jesus. It is the commonest complaint from those who curiously or wistfully say, 'Sir, we would see Jesus,' that He has been so surrounded and so dressed and disguised by the interpretations of His familiars and friends, that He cannot be seen as He was and is. 'The worst that any sect can do for Christ is to make Him incredible.'

3. Consider the surprises men meet as they seek to see what Jesus is like. The supreme surprise is that they discover how clearly and completely Jesus sees what they are like, and reveals it to their own mind and conscience. It is not difficult to surmise



what the crowd said when Zacchæus climbed the tree by the wayside. They saw a little man taking advantage of a good position to secure a better sight than his neighbours. Doubtless they saw something characteristic in what he did. 'The nimble rascal,' said one; 'if he cannot get what he wants in one way, he will in another.' But Jesus saw with other eyes. He saw a man seared and hardened in long years of apathy and neglect, unable to overcome the disablements of training, environment, occupation, and repute, with a soul capable of great attainments but with little chance given to reach them.

The last sight we have of Zacchæus carries all the happy discovery men and women have been making ever since, when they have tried to see what Jesus is like. It is a sight of a man moved by mercy to mercy, and by generous love to penitence and a deed of restitution. Thus is the pardoning and renewing love of God made visible and credible to us for ever in the face of Jesus Christ, and comes upon darkened souls with the happy surprise of spring after the winter of their discontent, of morning after the night of their forsakenness and despair.<sup>1</sup>

#### EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

##### The Persistent Purpose.

'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.'—  
Gn 32<sup>28</sup>.

This is one of the many arresting sayings in which the Bible is so rich—sayings that write themselves for ever on the heart of mankind, and may become the guiding principle, the final epitome, of a human life. The saying is a paradox, for it defies reason by treating an obvious enemy as a disguised friend; but in this apparent inconsistency it ranks with other memorable paradoxes of the Bible. The helpless and agonized father, appealing to Jesus for the restoration of his son, cried, 'I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' Simon Peter, at once attracted and repelled by the discovery of the unsuspected majesty of his teacher-friend, instinctively prays, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' There is a paradox even on the lips of the Lord, in that perplexing cry of the Cross, which appeals to the very Father who seems to have withdrawn from His Son, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

The unforgettable cry of Jacob has a not less memorable setting. We think of the dark torrent rushing through the ravine, and the dangerous ford

by which Jacob's company have crossed. We see this man of mingled purposes lingering behind, as though reluctant to meet again the brother he wronged so many years before. Then, in the darkness of the night, there comes the lonely struggle with the stranger, that desperate encounter for very life, the agonized effort, and the grim discovery by Jacob that the stranger is stronger than he. It is a defeated man who somehow penetrates to the hope of a friend behind the fact of a foe, and appeals to a hidden power and will to save and not to destroy: 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' What is the meaning of a story so impressive and so suggestive as this?

One of the first discoveries we make in the great adventure of life is of *life's inevitabilities*. As soon as the little child begins to assert himself, he must learn that there is a world of objects round him which do not yield to his will. Unless he is to be that unhappy thing, a spoilt child, he will also discover a world of boys and girls, men and women, who do not always give way to him, whose wills must often assert themselves over his. When he is old enough to form his ambitions and plan his career, he is apt to forget the lessons he has learnt in other realms, and to ignore the inevitabilities of life.

Life is a bigger and more brutal thing than we thought, and it seems strangely regardless of our desires. Many a homely proverb, many a saying of the wise, teach us these stern laws of life, which reflect and continue Nature's sequence of cause and effect. We learn that bad work will follow us as long as we live, that every debt we incur must sooner or later be paid, that the lost opportunity never recurs, that the past is irrevocable. These are the realities of life, and until we learn them there is no reality in our religion. We do not really cry to God for help, we do not really pray, until we find something against which we are powerless, something from which we seek to be delivered, and from which we cannot save ourselves. The spiritual agonies through which a man must sooner or later go, if he does not drug himself by work or pleasure into unconsciousness of the real meaning of life, are the birth-hours of true and genuine religion. The ancient world saw its terrors gathered up into the forms of demons and evil spirits, and cried for deliverance from these. The modern world has brushed these forms of thought aside, but there still remains the sense of life's inevitabilities from which they sprang. There is still the handicap of some physical weakness that robs us of the prize of life when it seemed within our grasp; there is still the

<sup>1</sup> T. Yates, *The Strategies of Grace*, 171.

consciousness of the divided heart, the grip of some evil passion that will not let us go, or the scars of the old sin that will not be forgotten; there is still the great mystery of death. The proudest of us lives to learn that he is beaten and humiliated by something that is greater than himself, and unless he did learn it, he would remain an untaught fool, though all the intellectual wisdom of the ages were his.

The faith that gives the victory over these inevitabilities of life is that which sees them transformed by *God's initiatives*, that approach of God to man, in and through all these things, which gives to them a changed meaning. This does not mean an evasion of them, a mere flight from them. A good deal of what passes for religion is a running away from facts. These things are facts, and the only way in which their inevitability can be overcome is by changing their meaning. The Cross of Christ is the greatest example of this. In itself, it meant the inevitable end of a dreamer beating against the bars of the stern facts of life—for how could the lonely prophet of Nazareth hope to escape the cowardice, the selfishness, the prejudice, the spiritual blindness which crucified Him? Yet the Cross of Christ was transformed by a new meaning when men saw it in the light of a victorious purpose, crowned by God, when they saw it as the measure of the world in which they lived, and of the love of God which was seeking to save that world. The Cross is a transformed inevitability. In such transformation of meaning we have the new fact, as real as the old, and more powerful. God's greatest work is from within, rather than without, for this personal experience is the realm of His Holy Spirit. When the unbeliever tauntingly asked what God had done for Stephen, in letting him be stoned to death, the just reply was: 'This is what God did for him: He gave him the power to say, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."'

The power of the Spirit of God to transform the meaning of life for us comes through God's own initiative. We love, because He first loved us. It is in and through the grace of Jesus Christ that we discover the God who has come out to meet us, sinners as we are, not in wrath but in holy love. A prophet pictures Israel's God as coming forth from Zion across the wilderness to seek His people, saying, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' This is a prophecy of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and of the revelation of the Father in the gospel and Cross of Jesus Christ. Phillips Brooks put the emphasis in the right place when he

answered the question as to what had been the secret of his life by saying, 'Less and less, I think, grows the consciousness of seeking God. Greater and greater grows the certainty that He is seeking us and giving Himself to us to the complete measure of our present capacity.' Through the discovery of Him who has come out to meet us, we gain the new confidence that plucks victory from defeat, and share the new spirit that transforms life and life's inevitabilities. Those only are 'saved' men who share the Spirit of Christ through the grace of Christ, men who no longer fear what life can do to them, because all things are theirs, and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

But the power of God's initiatives to transform the meaning of life's inevitabilities is conditioned by *man's persistencies*. If it is in the spirit of man that the victory has to be won, that spirit must be made God's. Now it is our very nature that we cannot be made good or brought into fellowship with God against our desire. That is His own law—the law He has laid down in making man in His own image. Our need of Him must not be the passing wish of a moment, a sentimental longing, the base expedient of insincerity or cowardice. It must be a persistent purpose that learns to cry, out of the darkness and the apparent defeat, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' Let us try to take that as a bit of prosaic logic, and we make nonsense of it. How can man constrain God? How can man win his best victory by defeat? Yet that paradox is true of the highest and deepest things—that they pass beyond our reasonings, and prove themselves by our experience of them. It is enough that we have caught a glimpse of something beyond the appearance of things, a glimpse that gives us the courage and hope to go on, and teaches us to see the truth of the saying, 'Tisn't life that matters. 'Tis the courage you bring to it.'

It would seem that the supreme witness that we belong to God is in our persistent purpose not to let Him go; and this is true, if we rightly understand what we are saying. It does not mean that we find assurance in our unaided effort, or even in the moral strength by which we do go on. The truth is rather that in this close and desperate grip on God we discover the yet closer grip of God on us. We shall not let Him go—because He will not let us go. He has us in His power; he has taught us our weakness; and now He will show us His strength. The proof of all this is not in any text of Scripture, not in any testimony of other men. The proof must come new and clear to our



own hearts in this inner consciousness of a struggle with God Himself. We thought it was a struggle with an enemy, we find that an Unknown Friend is holding us. The persistency of our own purpose is, indeed, a frail and unsafe thing; but what if it is the witness of His Spirit in us, the proof of His purpose? This is where the innermost transformation of the Spirit is wrought—when He convinces us that within our wavering, despairing purpose there is God's own purpose concealed. Then we see that His grace is perfected in our weakness. We learn the truth which underlies the testimony of Israel's prophets, and indeed of all who witness for God—that ours is somehow God's, and therefore God's is ours.<sup>1</sup>

#### NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

##### Immortality as preached by Christ.

'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.'—Jn 14<sup>2</sup>.

As the Jew looked forward to an immortal nation that would dominate all the nations of the world, so Christ taught men to expect an immortal kingdom in which all the empires of earth should find a place.

1. *Its character.*—From the outset Christ proclaimed that His Kingdom was at hand, was indeed present in the world though not yet manifested. Its manifestation would take place at the end of the world. But, though He knew all about it, being as it was a principle included in the foundation of the world, He does not say as much about it as we should like. This reserve may be partly due to the fact that no earthly image could convey a clear conception of its wonderful realities. We live in the limitations of time and space: our thoughts are bounded by material conditions. How, then, could the Eternal Kingdom, which we are led to suppose transcends time and space, be expressed to us so that we could understand it? It may also be that He felt that it was best for us to concentrate our minds on so doing our duty here that we should not miss the glory there. There was always a danger lest the vast interests of the world to come should blind men's eyes to the importance of the present.

Christ then said but little, but He said enough to stimulate hope and nourish self-sacrifice. Speaking generally, He described it under the most delightful images: He compared it now to a bridal festival, now to a joyous supper, now to the springtime of the world, the regeneration, when all things are

seen in the fresh glory of youth and life. Joyous freedom was, then, the general character of the new Kingdom. But it was an organized Kingdom, and as such was under the rule of a King and authorities acting under Him. And the one spirit that pervaded every action, corporate or single, was service.

2. *The varied positions that find place there.*—There were thrones on which the Apostles would sit; there were cities over which those who had been faithful over a few things should rule; there were high positions, a right and a left, only granted to those for whom they had been prepared. Christ took up this feeling which protests against a dead level of equality, and promised that it would find expression in the Kingdom of God. He knew its dangers in competition and rivalry, He saw them active amongst His own followers, but He did not meet them by saying that it was wrong and must be stamped out. He did not rebuke St. James and St. John in their desire for the very highest places by saying that they did not exist, but by showing that they were only won at great cost, and, therefore, could not be bestowed in any arbitrary way and could only be given to those for whom they were prepared. And, when the ten were indignant with their two brethren for having, as it were, tried to steal a march upon them and win a first promise, Christ does not say, as some have misrepresented Him: 'These distinctions that you quarrel about are unreal, and can find no place in a perfect Kingdom, for there all are equal,' but on the contrary not only declares there are great positions and first places, but tells them how to win them. In the world, He says, such positions are expressed by lordship and authority, but in His Kingdom by humility and service.

3. *Its wide expansiveness.*—We pass now to the consideration of its large hospitality. When we think of the ages that have passed since the first man, and of the hopes and expectations formed in all ages of entering at death into a new life, the mind is unable to realize the immensity of human life that has passed before the mind of God to its great future. Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Grecians, Romans, Indians, Europeans, Kaffirs, Malays, Chinese, Japanese, and the countless others of whom history knows nothing are all immortal spirits, waiting for the decision of the Great Judge of All Mankind. When the mind becomes dizzy with the contemplation of this infinite number, the thought presses in that they are not all immortal, that millions and millions have been buried in the dust-heap of humanity,

<sup>1</sup> H. Wheeler Robinson, in *If I had only One Sermon to Preach*, 187.

that as the vast majority of seeds never flower, and an infinite proportion of eggs are never hatched, so most of the men and women who have lived are as though they had never been. It is very tempting to cut the Gordian knot in this easy way, and, after the analogy of physical life, to reserve immortality to those who are in Christ. And it is not therefore surprising that the New Testament should have been read by some scholars in this sense, and the words life and death always interpreted as meaning existence and non-existence. But the difficulty remains that, when our Lord taught, the belief in universal immortality prevailed. His disciples held it. If, then, Christ taught conditional immortality it was new teaching, and would surely have been made perfectly clear and free from all ambiguity. This, all would admit, is not the case. And further, there are teachings, such as that contained in the Parable of Dives and Lazarus, where Dives is still found existing after death, and those which imply a universal judgment of bad as well as good, which are inconsistent with this belief.

And apart from Scripture it is not easy, in view of the knowledge that each created soul is infinitely precious to the heart of God, and that in the language of the Gospels He leaves the ninety-nine in order to recover the one, to suppose that He would destroy the souls of myriads to whom no gospel came. Rather it is better to throw ourselves upon that one saying of Christ which opens out such great possibilities: 'In my Father's house are many mansions, or abiding-places.'

What are those abiding-places? It may be, as Dr. Swete suggests, that they are a means of progress in which 'men go from strength to strength as men on a long journey go from halting-place to halting-place till the end is reached.' World after world stretches in the infinite space over which God rules, and afford fresh training-ground for those who have had but little opportunity. Christ's promise, then, stands for a wide expansiveness.

4. *Exclusiveness*.—We now ask, Does this wide inclusiveness include every one? Does it mean universalism? We know that God's Will is that all men should be saved, that He is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe, and that His mercy is over all His works. But we know also that the gift of free will to His creatures has in some measure limited His Almighty power. Man's freedom stands up against God's freedom in a mystery that none can explain. It is possible for a man to reject the love of God. And the

experience of life confirms the witness of history that some men as they draw near to death grow worse instead of better. It might be said that the shock of death and the facing of spiritual realities change that. But there is no evidence to show this. The Bishop of Oxford does not probably overstate the case when he says: 'The universalism which is so popular to-day—the belief that every created spirit must ultimately be recovered to fulfil the end of its being in God, though it is supported by some early Christian authorities, and though it has never been formally condemned by the Church with any oecumenical judgment, is flatly contrary, plainly contrary, to the language used by our Lord about the destinies of men, and generally to the language of the New Testament.'

But whilst this may and must be said, no reader of the Scriptures doubts that such as find themselves excluded from the bliss of the redeemed are there of their own will. In some mysterious way the capacity for goodness, the taste for heaven, the joy in God have been destroyed.

It is hard to suppose that the evil, sullen will which refuses to acknowledge God's goodness and justice should be eternally set against Him. The Kingdom of His love and glory would not be ideal if even in a corner of it there was perpetual discontent and hatred. In some way evil must be overthrown. It might be by the loss of the resurrection body. That, at least, has been the thought of some close students of our Lord's words.

But if this be so, what, then, is the condition of the faithful departed? The souls beneath the altar are pictured by St. John as crying, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' as if they longed for the fullness of the resurrection life. And it is specially interesting to note that, in response to their prayers, 'there was given to each one of them a white robe,' *i.e.* some partial expression, some beginning of the resurrection life which one day would be perfected. They were not left unclothed but 'clothed upon,' and so were enabled to rest, *i.e.* remain content with this holy pledge till their final and complete glory should be obtained.

And these suggestions from Revelation are confirmed by reason. We know that in this world wherever there is life it will find outward expression. 'There is no known form of energy separate from matter.' Life is ever seeking to clothe itself. If in the autumn it sheds part of its glory, in the spring it again embodies itself. And as it is here, so it may be in the world to come. But there the power that makes for embodiment may well be faith, as the power here is called life. It is true



that the thought exceeds our grasp, but when we seem overwhelmed and our feet begin to slip we can turn in confidence to the simple fact of Jesus. He is the resurrection and the life, and He will bring us there.<sup>1</sup>

We know not when, we know not where,  
We know not what that world will be;  
But this we know—it will be fair  
To see.

With heart athirst and thirsty face  
We know and know not what shall be:  
Christ Jesus bring us of His grace  
To see.

Christ Jesus bring us of His grace,  
Beyond all prayers our hope can pray,  
One day to see Him face to Face,  
One day.

#### TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

##### The Altered Face.

'And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered.'—Lk 9<sup>28</sup>.

1. Never was any face watched with closer scrutiny than the disciples watched the face of Jesus. The Gospels are full of these touches of intimate observation, particularly that one which we suppose to have come directly through Peter, the man who was gifted with powers of observation superior to his powers of reflection. Many times the meaning of the words or deeds of Jesus was read in His face before it was revealed in what He said or did. The face is always the mirror of the soul, and the face of Jesus could not have been other than beautiful, since it mirrored the most beautiful soul that ever found a home in this shadowed world.

2. The passage demonstrates that the *Transfiguration took place within before it was manifested without*. The glory was in His soul before it extended its lustre to His face, His form, His clothing, and brought about it the voices of the unseen world. The real miracle—if that be the word to use—was the soul of Jesus. The soul is indeed the only home of miracles. They do still happen there and are not even to be wished for anywhere else. But miracles within the soul may still be prayed for. They are indeed the normal works of God.

3. In the life of Jesus there was a high mountain of glory and a deep valley of humiliation—Tabor

<sup>1</sup> G. H. S. Walpole, *Life in the World to Come*, 52.

and Gethsemane—the one where heaven came down to Him, and the other where Sheol yawned at His feet; the one where the wings of angels cast shadows of light upon His face, and the other where drops of bloody sweat fell from His brow to the ground—in either case He was at prayer. He Himself has not described these great experiences. We have only the records of the disciples, and they, alas, were external witnesses, rather too coarse as yet to enter fully into their deepest meaning, but they could not but notice that He ever sought communion with God and with Nature, rather than with men, at such times. Because to pray alone was a rule of His life, their references to it ring through their stories like a formula.

4. Here a suggestive question emerges. Did Jesus pray to induce a certain attitude of mind, or was it because of His state of mind that He prayed? Doubtless it was both, but just now we may emphasize the latter aspect of the case. Having the mind He had, Jesus could do no other than pray.

So far as we are concerned, we usually pray in the hope of inducing a better state of mind. We become conscious of our sins, and pray in the hope of being forgiven or helped. We are in doubt, and pray for faith. We feel revengeful, and pray for grace to forgive. Normally our prayer life is quiescent or undecided. It becomes intense in our hour of need. And for this reason our experience is often unsatisfactory. Our prayers often increase our anxiety, give poignancy to our doubts, make more abject our impotence. All depends upon our belief in the reality of a definite response. Failing that, our case is worse than before. We are like Peter, whose unrooted faith tempted him to venture upon the waters, only to be stabbed with sudden unbelief, so that he cried, 'Lord, save, or I perish.' By such experience we judge the efficacy of prayer. No one would deny that such evidences have been given, but they are not to be taken as normal. Abiding prayer is the outcome of life. If we lived a certain kind of life we could not help but pray. We pray to be made good, but if we were good we would instinctively pray. We pray for faith; but if we had faith, could we do other than pray?

5. Can any one be surprised that Jesus was a man of prayer? The Gospels give us clear insight into His mind. It is evident that God was very real to Him. He was in the world as its Creator and Governor, and yet more wonderfully as a Father. The world was His, for He made it. Therefore it was very sacred to Jesus. He revelled in its order, its mystery, its peaceful operations, its stormfulness. He preferred the beauty of the

lilies to the grandeur of Solomon, and was surprised that His disciples should be terrified by a storm. He loved the creatures of the wild and counted not their ravaging as though it made jangling discord of the anthem of creation. 'In the wilderness,' says Mark, 'he was tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto him.' Satan, wild beasts, and angels! His was a comprehensive mind, wherein apparent contradiction subsided into harmony. He seems to have prayed and trusted, as we declare we cannot:

Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed.

We may think that He was wrong, as morbid people do think that healthy people are wrong, but we are bound to admit that *the constitution of His mind made prayer perfectly normal.*

We note also that what Jesus taught of Nature was reflected in His thought of man. Loving all things, great and small, it was inevitable that He would think more of man than of any other creature. The reason was that man could have fellowship with God as they could not; could work with God as they could not. 'My father worketh hitherto, and I work,' was His interpretation of His own life and ministry. He reacted against whatever prevented man from enjoying that fellowship and co-operation. It was why He disliked sickness and lack of faith. To cause even a little child to stumble upon this upward path was a crime unspeakable.

He was aware of evil. He held that men should resist it, and overcome it, but He did not expect to see it entirely eliminated. The wheat and the tares would grow on together to the end, but, for all that, there was a process of selection already at work which in the end would be precisely discriminating.

His belief in the possibilities of good in man was infinite. 'Ye shall be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect'—the boldest words ever spoken by human lips.

For such an one, the Beatitudes are not counsels of perfection, but working principles, reasonable in themselves and actually tried out in life. They are a transcription of the rules by which He lived. Because they had 'blessed' Him, He declared that any one else who lived by them would also be blessed.

6. The greater part of our difficulty is to persuade ourselves that the world is really, in fact, what it seemed to be to Jesus. Our impression is that the hard facts of life make faith and prayer difficult, if not, indeed, impossible. We are tempted to

think that the Master was a great soul who, by some ethereal quality, skimmed lightly over the surface of life, borne up by angels' hands, 'lest he should dash his foot against a stone'; only the truth is that He did not pass lightly over its surface, but went down into its depths, 'the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.' If ever a man had the right to say that the world was cruel, unjust, capricious, it was He. Whatever the secret of His wonderful trust, it was not superficiality, but rather depth. Is not our lack of faith due to shallowness? We cry out so quickly when we *begin* to sink. We surrender our ideals to the mere challenge of a blatant Goliath. Opportunism is the real antagonist of faith and the destroyer of prayer. Perhaps, after all, the world is as Jesus saw it, if we saw deeply enough. It is justified to the soul that maintains its trust.

7. To return to the words of the text, 'as he prayed, *the fashion of his countenance was altered.*'

This is, indeed, the distinctive feature of the Transfiguration scene. Something of that glory He brought with Him as He drew near to God; something of it was brought to Him as God drew near to Him. There was first an emanation and then an invasion. It was, in superlative degree, what an ancient scribe recorded of Moses: 'The Lord talked with Moses as a man talketh with his friend.'

Only twice did His disciples—and not all of them, but the three most intimate—watch Him at prayer and record their impressions. Once it was upon Mount Tabor, and once in the Garden of Gethsemane. Once it was at the height of His glory, and once in the depth of His sorrow. Once His face shone like the sun, and once they saw great drops of blood falling like sweat to the ground. Once He seemed upborne by invisible wings, and once He groaned like a man in hard labour. Once the face was transfigured, and once it seemed disfigured. But heavenly succour completed both manifestations.

In the very greatest hours of His soul-life Jesus sought man as well as God. Just where our human fellowship most often fails, His was consummated. There are few hours more lonely for most of us than those of triumph and bitter sorrow. Then, if we know not how to go to God, at least we get away from man. Jesus found fellowship with God and with man when life reached its zenith and its nadir. The altered countenance was the symbol of the perfected fellowship with the Divine and with the human.

Oh! for a prayer-life that would alter our faces! <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Norwood, *The Gospel of Distrust*, 49.



## The Heavenly Intercession of Christ.

BY THE REVEREND J. IVOR WENSLEY, M.A., B.D., BIRMINGHAM.

MUCH attention has been given during the last generation or so to 'the Jesus of the Gospels.' On the whole, the results of careful and devout study of the Central Figure of history have been all to the good, for we have a clearer conception of Jesus, and of His life and teaching, than people have had, perhaps, in any generation since the earliest days of the Church. But we need to remind ourselves that the Christ of Christian faith is not merely the Man of Nazareth, who once for a space lived on earth, lived incomparably and taught with authority. We might well ask whether the Gospels would have been written at all unless men had held the faith in Christ expressed in the Epistles. What is that faith? We may take the word of H. B. Swete: 'The Christ of the New Testament is a Person who not only lived and died on the earth, but who rose again, and in His risen humanity ascended to heaven, and from that day to the present hour lives and reigns there.' If that judgment should be dismissed as out-of-date—it was stated in 1910—let a more recent opinion be advanced. Dr. Moffatt, in his *Approach to the New Testament* (1921), declares: 'In the New Testament we enter a little world of men who are doing more than looking back at Jesus; they are looking up to Him, revering as well as remembering Him, and revering Him as divine.'

We are to consider, now, especially, one of the activities assigned by some of the New Testament writers to the living, ascended Christ. There are three familiar passages that we shall have in mind. The first, from Ro 8<sup>34</sup>, 'It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, *who also maketh intercession for us.*' Then from He 7<sup>25</sup>, 'Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Finally, 1 Jn 2<sup>1</sup>, 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' The phrase frequent in relation to prayer and praise in the Pauline Epistles generally, 'through Jesus Christ,' is remembered, and may be discovered to hold a significance which brings it into close relation with the passages cited.

It is true that the idea of the heavenly intercession of Jesus Christ does not loom large in the

New Testament. It is not suggested at all in the bulk of the writings. Even from the Fourth Gospel, where the idea might have been expected, it is absent. It is only in a few Epistles that we discover any reference to the doctrine, but, all the same, it is there. As Denney says: 'The New Testament exhibits the Lord Himself as engaged in carrying on His own work above. That work culminates in what is specifically described as His intercession. The apostles mention this sacred function with a kind of adoring awe, which is quite peculiar even in the New Testament. It seems to have impressed them as one of the unimaginable wonders of redemption—something which in love went far beyond all that we could ask or think. When inspired thought touches it, it rests on it as on an unsurpassable height.'

As to the place occupied by this conception of Christ as Heavenly Intercessor, in the later thought of the Church, and particularly in more recent tendencies, these points only can be noted:

(a) The ancient and historic creeds are content for the most part with a reference to the Ascension and the Session at the right hand of the Father. The credal declarations of the Reformation times, however, often add references to the heavenly intercession, as a continuation of the priestly work of Christ, an extension of His Atonement. So in the Shorter Catechism we read: 'Christ executeth the office of a priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice . . . and in making continual intercession for us.' Many other declarations from earlier Reformation documents contain similar words.

(b) Apart from credal statements, the idea has appeared in the teaching of the Church from early days. Here is Origen: 'The Son of God is the High-priest for our sacrifice, and the Advocate with the Father. He prays with the praying, and supplicates with the supplicants.' There must have been some mighty sermons on this theme by Reformation and Puritan preachers, while in our own day it may safely be claimed, there are very few sermons preached on the subject of our Lord's heavenly intercession. There is a memorable sermon by Oswald Dykes, but by this time he, too, belongs to the past. A living preacher, Dr. Gossip, makes an interesting reference to the conception

in his sermon entitled 'The Preface we call the Gospels' (on the text from Ac 1<sup>1</sup>, 'All that Jesus began both to do and to teach'): 'Even in heaven, His mind is full of us, they say, constantly thinking of us, planning for us, praying on our behalf. It was not only three years He gave us, no, nor three and thirty, but to all eternity He lives for us, works for us, loves us, and offers continually a prevailing intercession for us.' Such a reference is almost unique in current sermonic literature.

(c) We must observe that while Christ as Intercessor does not occupy to any great extent the attention of the New Testament writers, of the framers of the historic creeds, or of modern preachers, the thought comes into prominence in the hymns and prayers of Christian worship. How familiar the conclusions to prayers—'through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord,' 'through our only Advocate and Mediator'! Even more familiar are the hymns in which the conception finds embodiment. There is the Paraphrase by Michael Bruce:

Where high the heavenly temple stands,  
The House of God not made with hands,  
A Great High Priest our nature wears,  
The Patron of mankind appears.

Most familiar of all, perhaps, are the lines which suggest our thinking of Christ as:

Praying for His children  
In that blessed place,  
Calling them to glory,  
Sending them His grace.

It is time, now, to inquire what there is to be discussed. To begin with, is it not correct to state that the idea of Christ as appearing before the Father for us is 'very much exposed to serious and perilous misconception'? In human minds, the matter may be understood in a manner that is only too human, and certain fundamental assertions of the Christian faith may be imperilled. For one thing, it may be so maintained as to involve a sub-Christian view of God. Mr. A. C. Benson describes an experience that was his while a guest in some ancient country mansion. In the morning—apparently he was still in bed—he heard the sound of singing from the private chapel, to which his room was nearer than he had supposed. These are the words that came to him:

Before His Father's throne,  
His sacrifice He pleads,  
And with unceasing prayer  
For us He intercedes

And he remarks: 'What have we here but the sad belief drawn from the dark ages of the world that the wrathful Creator of men, full of gloomy indignation at their perverseness and wilfulness, needs the constant intercession of the Eternal Son, who is, too, in a sense Himself, to appease the anger with which He regards the sheep of His hand. I really cannot, in the depths of my heart, echo that dark belief' (*The Thread of Gold*). We used to hear of 'the strife of attributes.' Is there a strife of Persons, or at any rate a lack of complete harmony, in the Godhead, so that One of the Persons has to be urged and entreated by Another? These questions are unreal to most of us, because a fundamental emphasis of the New Testament has been brought home to us. Luther's contention that the worst heresy is that 'which distinguishes between the disposition of God and that of Christ' is much in our way of thinking. If we have in Christ the revelation of what God essentially is, how can we fit into our scheme of thought that appeal and entreaty of Christ for men before the Father? The desire to secure some one 'to speak for us' suggests a lack of confidence in, or, at any rate, of assurance of generous treatment from, the person with whom we have to do. The final test of any religious idea is the conception of God it involves. Must it not be admitted that the idea of Christ's heavenly intercession does, at first, apparently involve a view of God that is for us impossible, impossible in the light of all that Jesus has assured us? We recall, too, the mischief wrought by later elaboration of the ideas of mediatorship and intercession in heaven. Hear T. M. Lindsay on the trend of things in the Pre-Reformation Church: 'Dread of the Son as judge gave rise to the devotion to the Mother as Intercessor.' There was a further development: 'The Virgin herself had to be interceded with to induce her to plead with her Son for men sunk in sin, and her mother (St. Anna) became the object of a cult.' With such a warning before us, it is well to recognize that any sort of suspicion that there is a contrast, or even a difference, between the Father and the Son in relation to compassion for human need is foreign to the New Testament. But it does not solve the difficulty of the whole matter to discover that it is actually in such an exultant declaration of the love of God in Christ as Ro 8 that we have one of the rare references in the New Testament to Christ's heavenly intercession.

Some would deal very simply with the doctrine. They would point us to its source. It is necessary to remind ourselves, by the way, that a doctrine



is not necessarily invalidated when its origin has been discovered and its development traced. But it is impossible to deny that we have here, as elsewhere in Christianity, ancient forms of thought used in connexion with a new faith. We cannot ignore the fact that there are instances of angelic intercession in the Old Testament. See Zechariah, 'An angel of the Lord answered, and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy upon Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah?' In the Book of Job there are hints of the same thought. But it is especially in extra-canonical Jewish literature that the conception of mediators and intercessors between man and God reaches conspicuous prominence. Dr. Wheeler Robinson speaks of 'the post-exilic idea of the transcendent God who deals with the world only through the agency of innumerable intermediate beings.' Take To 12<sup>6</sup>, 'I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints.' Take Enoch, where angels desire man's intercession for them, and are told, 'You should intercede for men, not men for you.' In the Similitudes we have this, 'The third voice I heard pray and intercede for those who dwell on the earth, and supplicate in the name of the Lord of spirits.' In the Book of Jubilees, Isaac is represented as consoling Rebecca in these terms, 'Fear not thou on account of Jacob, for the guardian of Jacob is great and powerful and honoured, and prays more than the guardian of Esau.'

Many have reminded us, in this connexion, of the widespread notion in post-exilic religion that man could not enter into direct touch with God. It seemed natural to think of intermediaries, priests on earth, and angels or saints in heaven. It has to be noted, however, that in none of the New Testament writings in which mention is made of our Lord's heavenly intercession is there any sign of sympathy with the idea of the mediation, or the intercession, of angelic beings. Thus Moffatt on the writer of Hebrews (1<sup>14</sup>): 'He ignores the Jewish doctrine voiced in the Testament of Levi that in the sixth heaven the angels of the Presence sacrifice and intercede for the living.' We may note here, that unlike the writer of Hebrews, neither Paul nor the author of 1 John thinks of Christ as a heavenly High Priest, though the idea of Christ's intercession appears in the writings of all three.

All we have a right to conclude, in view of the survey of later Jewish thought, is that certain thought-forms were at hand for the writers of the New Testament, and that these thought-forms

were filled with new and richer content. Men had been familiar in their religious life and thought with the idea of a priesthood. Christ the great High Priest has rendered all official priesthoods unnecessary. Men had thought of angels appearing for them before God. They have no further use for such a conception, for Christ is there before the throne.

There is surely one other thing to be said with regard to the entry of this conception into Christian thought. The memory of the prayers of Jesus when on earth was cherished. It is significant that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, one of those who mentions Christ's heavenly intercession, preserves for us a picture of Jesus 'in the days of his flesh' offering up prayers 'with strong crying and tears.' So Glover remarks: 'Jesus at all events made a practice of intercession. "I have prayed for thee," He said to Peter (Lk 22<sup>32</sup>), and the writers of the New Testament feel that it is only natural for Jesus, Risen, Ascended, and Glorified, to make intercession for us still.' However men in recent times have been disposed to distinguish sharply between 'the Jesus of history' and 'the Christ of faith,' for the New Testament writers there is a real continuity between the lowly Man and the Exalted Lord. As Dr. Hugh Mackintosh observes, He is viewed 'as prolonging in His invisible retreat on high those tender offices of prayer which He had begun to discharge on our behalf even before the hand of death had touched His flesh with glory.'

The question for us is whether the representation of our Lord as at the right hand of the Father, engaged in intercession, is of value for to-day. Some are inclined to suggest that it would be well for us to drop the idea altogether, as at best outworn and uncongenial to our ways of thinking, at worst as associated with failure to credit news regarded, apparently, as all too good to be true—that the Father's heart is all tenderness and readiness to respond to men's cries of need. To many, the doctrine of Christ's heavenly intercession appears crude and artificial. But here, as in other directions, judgments can be too quickly arrived at to be valid. It is possible so to simplify the message of the New Testament as to omit its richness of meaning. Sometimes, as Denney suggested in relation to doctrines of the Atonement, it is better to keep the crude forms, than to lose vital truth. What seems to be crudity may be only the rough casket that holds the jewel. Some are offended by the symbolism involved, the session at the right hand of God, the prayers before the

presence of God. It must be asked, What language regarding Divine Reality is other than symbolic? We must use terms that have assumed meaning for us in other and less exalted realms of experience. The only alternative to the use of symbolic language is the use of abstract terms, or mathematical formulæ, unless we are silent altogether. It is questionable whether abstract or mathematical terms are adequate to any attempted description of what the Divine Reality means for the religious man. If the term 'right hand of God' means, as Calvin suggested, not locality but lordship, not spatial remoteness but spiritual royalty, it may be possible to discover, also, a value in the symbolic language, 'Christ is interceding for us.'

Attention, in passing, might be called to what must be regarded as inadequate attempts to explain the content of the New Testament conception of the interceding Christ. To speak as Professor A. G. Hogg does of 'support from the strong soul of Christ' as the essence of the idea of His intercession, does not take us very far. One is reluctant to suggest that Dr. Glover treats any subject in an inadequate fashion, but is it enough to say with respect to this theme, 'In particular Paul in his business of preaching the Gospel wants the support of men's prayers, as others have wanted it since him, and he suggests it again and again. That is one of the great things, he feels, about Christ, "Who also maketh intercession for us." ' It is finely said, but is that all there is to be said? In these cases, the difficulties are not recognized. One aspect of New Testament thought concerning Christ, that He is ineffably one with the Father, is for the moment ignored. The real difficulty lies in trying to combine the two conceptions, Christ one with the Father, and Christ interceding with the Father.

In trying to estimate the value of the New Testament representation of Christ as both 'at the right hand of God,' and making 'intercession for us,' it may be remarked that for Christian faith, 'Christ does not disappear behind God, as it were'; He does not 'fade out' (if the term may be used), but abides as an object of faith. But what of the Father? Is Christ the only God? We remember the New Testament phrase 'through Jesus Christ.' Believers 'believe in God' through Christ, 'through Him' they have 'access unto the Father.' It has been stated that for Paul belief in God and belief in Christ were not separate and distinct, but two not always clearly distinguished aspects of belief. Dr. Henry Sloan Coffin has an astonishingly striking statement, 'The Ascension

Christianized the thought of God.' There are some who find no particular attraction in the thought of the Ascension, but what if it does suggest to us the truth that Christ is in God, in such a way that we cannot think rightly of God, without thinking of Christ? Said Erskine of Linlathen, 'There is a demand within us to see on the throne of the universe a Being who can sympathize with us.' That demand is met, if the doctrine of Christ's intercession is held fast. Many of the older writers on this theme—and older writers on many themes of theology show a profundity lacking in their successors—pointed out, as Pearson does, that we must not look upon the intercession as 'a servile or precarious, but rather as an efficacious and glorious intercession as of Him to whom all power is given in heaven and earth.' Perhaps Pearson had read Chrysostom, who remarks, 'How are we to conceive of His intercession? Not certainly as of one on bended knee and with outstretched arms—Christ's very presence at the throne on high is an intercession for us.' Suppose we think of the matter somewhat in this fashion: Jesus Christ in the days of His sojourn on earth showed sympathy with men and women, and had compassion on them. All that sympathy, all that compassion, are on the very throne of God, yea, in the very heart of God. Dr. R. J. Campbell told long ago a story of a woman in distress of mind who said, 'I could tell Jesus everything if He were here, but I cannot tell God.' In reality, that graciousness and that tenderness in Jesus which would have called out the woman's story, are there still in Jesus, who for ever lives and reigns with the Father.

Dr. Fairbairn has a suggestive word in regard to the Apostolic writers. 'They use language which others may feel inconsistent with monotheism but that they do not, for they have felt their way into an order of ideas which combines and harmonizes elements that would have seemed alien to the older thought; but all these elements make Deity infinitely more rich and gracious and beautiful than any man or any religion had before imagined Him to be.' There is surely something of this enrichment of thought in holding the two truths that, viewed from certain angles, seem to conflict—God as the loving Father of men, and Christ yet interceding before Him for men. Is there not some meaning in the old Scholastic dictum that the intercession of Christ is not 'verbal' but 'real'? So one in our day has said, 'The intercession of the Ascended Lord is not a prayer but a life.'



The symbolic language, then, Christ enthroned and interceding, conserves for us a truer and fuller thought of God, and of Christ, than many other terms that seem simpler. 'It is part of the best Christian tradition,' to quote Dr. H. R. Mackintosh again, 'that as our Lord now lives in God, and God in Him, His thought and power are continually

directed to all believers, and that in these most real relations with men, He acts, as it were, from within the very being of God Himself.' So thinking of these things, we may discover a new and ampler significance in familiar words:

Hallelujah! *Christ in God,  
God in Christ, is All in all.*

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## Contributions and Comments.

### St Paul's Epistle to Philemon : Slavery.

THE following extract from Dr. Farnell's most informing and interesting Gifford Lectures (1924-25) on 'The Attributes of God' is very striking: 'As Greece was the first home of modernism, it was only Greece that dared to draw the corollary that if all souls are equal before God, slavery is unjustified. To this corollary Christendom was blind for long. As against the narrow view of Aristotle that the barbarian is by nature intended for slavery, Philemon, an Attic poet of the fourth century, anticipates the doctrine of the American Revolution by declaring that "no one is by nature born a slave."' It is surely an interesting fact that one, by name Philemon, should have thus anticipated an epistle written four centuries later by a Christian Apostle to one of the same name, an epistle which Professor Godet called 'the oldest Petition for the abolition of slavery.' Clearly that learned com-

mentator had not read Frag. 39. Meineke, *Frag. Graec.* 4, p. 47, as above.

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### 1 Kings xviii.

THERE is nothing very 'startling' in the explanation offered by Dr. Kennett on 'The Altar Fire' (referred to by you on p. 49 of your November number), that a supply of naphtha may have been available for the purpose. As far back as Dr. Skinner's 'Kings' in the Century Bible (was not this 1903?) the suggestion of an earlier (unnamed) commentator that naphtha may have been used is referred to, though only to be somewhat scornfully rejected. It would be interesting to know by whom the suggestion was first made.

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## Our Lord's Conception of His Messiahship in relation to Old Testament Prophecy.

BY THE REVEREND HENRY J. ALLEN, M.A., TREALES VICARAGE, KIRKHAM, LANCs.

It may be well, at the outset, to call attention to a few important remarks upon this subject by some of our leading writers, in order that we may see clearly the nature of the problem confronting us.

The late Professor Addis tells us that 'The Old

Testament knows nothing of a Suffering Messiah.'<sup>1</sup>

Bishop Gore says: 'The question whether the contention of our Lord and His apostles, that the death and resurrection and glory of Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament, was justified

<sup>1</sup> Peake's *Commentary*, p. 372.

in fact, depends<sup>1</sup> in the main on the question whether Is 53, and the Psalms which group themselves round this central conception, really ought to be taken into the picture of "him who was to come," that is, the Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Leckie, in treating of 'Jesus' claim to be the Messiah,' closes with the following remark: 'We confess with reverence that the full-orbed meaning of Messiahship as it was mirrored in Christ's mind passes our knowledge.'<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Box, writing on the subject of the Apostles' and early Christians' peculiar use of the Old Testament for the purpose of substantiating Jesus' Messiahship, says: 'The existence of Books of *Testimonia*' (that is, collections of 'proof' passages from the Old Testament) 'within the primitive community of Christians may be said to have been made out. It is an important fact, the full significance of which has not yet been completely worked out. . . . The *Testimonia* reflect a new and remarkable exegesis of the old Hebrew Scriptures, carried out on bold and independent lines.'<sup>3</sup>

The problem confronting us, then, is this: Can we formulate a Messianic conception, such as was 'mirrored in Christ's mind,' which will remove the above, and cognate, difficulties? It would seem that we can—and with considerable assurance that it was really Christ's and His Apostles' view of the matter. It is this: That our Lord's own conception of His Messiahship in relation to Old Testament prophecy consisted in that of a *spiritual synthesis* of such prophecy taken as a whole, and not as involving the 'letter' of this or that concrete 'prophecy.' His synthesis seems to have had as its central concept the consummation of those many spiritual yearnings, aspirations, and hopes of mankind, and for mankind, manifested in the Old Testament; and also the establishment of an Eternal Spiritual King of an eternal spiritual kingdom of God—the latter confusedly

pictured there. As regards concrete passages of a 'Messianic' import, some approximate, in 'spirit,' very closely to our Lord's spiritual synthesis, notably Is 53, and He did not hesitate to call attention to it (Lk 22<sup>37</sup>). Others He would have nothing to do with—though tempted to do so. St. Paul sums up the whole matter in the words, 'comparing spiritual things with spiritual' (1 Co 2<sup>13</sup>); that is, comparing the many spiritual aspirations contained in the Old Testament with the spiritual ideals manifested in, and consummated by, Christ Jesus. And it is worthy of note that many of the Old Testament spiritual aspirations are of the highest order—clearly 'from God.'

From this synthetic standpoint Jesus used concrete prophecies either as furnishing Him with a 'sign' wherewith to help on the substantiation of His claim to be the Messiah, or as the 'spirit' of any specific prophecy contributed to His general synthesis. In other words, and more briefly, in Jesus was consummated the spiritual content and intent of Old Testament prophecy synthetically apprehended. It is hoped that the meaning and import (as also truth) of this conception will be clearer shortly. We may apply St. Paul's words to this conception, 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life'—for the 'letter' of prophecy, in the light of modern historical criticism, 'kills' much of the traditional conception of Christ's relationship to Old Testament prophecy; but the 'spirit' (the synthetic conception), indeed, gives new 'life' to it. Christ's conception of the *kingdom* was clearly the product of a spiritual synthesis of prophecy on that subject. Complementary and parallel to this was His conception of His Messiahship in relation to Old Testament prophecy; and was arrived at by Him by a similar process. As of the kingdom, so of its King.

Let us look at some of the New Testament evidence as it bears on the suggestion just made.

(1) An instance furnished by Jesus Himself of interpreting a Messianic passage according to its spiritual content and import is to be found in Mt 17<sup>10-12</sup>. 'And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And he answered and said, Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things; but I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed. Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them.' In this it is clear that Jesus regarded Malachi's prophecy as having been (in the 'spirit' of it) fulfilled in John the Baptist: though, obviously, he had fulfilled it in a very limited

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Spirit and the Church*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *An Outline of Christianity* (Peake and Parsons), p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> *The People and the Book* (Peake and others), p. 444.

It is perhaps needless to say that the contents of the Books of *Testimonia* should not be confused with the allegorical method of interpreting the Old Testament. The latter was not new, but was practised somewhat by the Jews in our Lord's day. St. Paul learned it from them, and adopted it occasionally. The newness appears to be in applying certain passages of the prophets and psalms to Jesus as the suffering and glorified and spiritual Messiah, rather than to a triumphant earthly king. See *A New Commentary* (Gore and others), p. 689b.



degree. But the 'spirit' of this prophecy was to find a second fulfilment in another 'Elijah' who was to come and 'restore all things'—spiritually. Jesus clearly referred to Himself—this was His work—and conceived of, not as the Jews conceived it—literally as of an earthly kingdom, but as God conceived it—spiritually, as of a spiritual kingdom of heaven. With this latter Elijah Jesus thus identified Himself. And, just as the Jews had done to John, so would they do also to Him. Malachi's prophecy was to be interpreted not on the basis of 'its own' (*idias*) literal content, but on the basis of the 'spirit' of such content; and so could receive more than one fulfilment. It was by this method of interpretation that Jesus viewed Himself as consummating the whole *corpus* of the 'spirit' of prophecy synthetically apprehended. This method characterizes His thought and teaching and conduct in general—all were habitually of the 'spirit.' 'It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh (the literal) profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are *spirit*, and are life' (Jn 6<sup>63</sup>). It was by reason of this method of interpreting prophecy that the Jews no more 'knew' Him than they did John. They looked at the 'letter' (*idlos*) of prophecy, and for a literal fulfilment thereof. Jesus looked at the 'spirit' of prophecy, and for a spiritual fulfilment. For this reason, again, they could not rise to His conception of the *kingdom*. A spiritual synthesis of prophecy on both points (Messiahship and Kingdom) was 'far above out of their sight.' Their method (the 'letter' or 'flesh') profited them nothing. It 'killed' them in the end. Christ's method is 'life' indeed, and to the truth of this His Church is an overwhelming witness. (We may also call to mind our Lord's words in Mt 22<sup>43</sup>, 'How then doth David in *spirit* call him Lord?').

(2) In 2 P 1<sup>20</sup> we read, 'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation'; that is, no prophecy of Scripture has the property of self-interpretation—from which it follows that no prophecy is to be interpreted on the basis of that which is essentially 'its own' (*idias*) literal content and immediate import as conceived of by the prophet, but on the basis of the 'spirit' of such content and import; and, generally speaking, in the same manner of prophecy as a whole.<sup>1</sup> 'Men spake from *God*, being moved

by the Holy Spirit.' Only God, therefore, could rightly interpret prophecy, and this He did through Jesus Christ; who, clearly, did not look at the 'literal' contents of prophecy, but to the 'spirit' of such contents.

From this standpoint Jesus, as to His Messiahship, is neither involved in, nor complicated by, the 'letter' (or literalness) of any 'prophecy' taken by itself, save only in respect to the 'spirit' of such prophecy, and synthetically so as regards prophecy as a whole. In other words, Jesus is the Consummator, not of the 'letter' of this or that prophecy, but of the *spirit* of all prophecy synthetically apprehended as a whole. What we lose in the 'letter' (the traditional method of interpretation) we more than gain in the 'spirit' by the synthetic conception; for there is no moral certainty more sure than that the Old Testament manifests the existence and working of a Holy Spirit in the hearts of men—moving (not compelling) them Godwards and upwards spiritually. By the synthetic method (adopting the words of the writer of the Epistle in v.<sup>19</sup>), 'We have the word of prophecy made more sure.' In other words, when we have '*first*' grasped the fact that no prophecy is to be interpreted in the 'letter,' but in the 'spirit,' 'we have the word of prophecy' (in general) 'made more sure.'

(3) In Rev 19<sup>10</sup>, the angel, speaking to John, is reported as teaching this same feature in connexion with Jesus' testimony. The angel identifies himself with John's 'brethren *that hold the testimony of Jesus*'; that is, to what Jesus testified—the *nature* of this testimony was something which the brethren possessed. The angel then goes on to point out (either for the benefit of those not possessing it, or more probably because there was grave danger of its being lost) what the nature of this testimony was. 'For the testimony of Jesus is the *spirit* of prophecy'; that is, Jesus testified to a spiritual interpretation of prophecy (synthetically)—not to the 'letter' of the concrete contents of prophecy. There is no reference whatever to false prophets in the angel's words, nor can such be read into them without making the passage obscure. Nor is there any such reference in the context. The angel's statement quite accurately describes Jesus' handling of Malachi's prophecy.

(4) This synthetic and spiritual method of interpreting prophecy seems to have been at the back of the mind of the writer of the Epistle to word is indicative of something that is *essentially peculiar to itself*.

<sup>1</sup> The writer of this Epistle uses the word *idlos* five times after this occasion. In all five it means 'his own,' 'their own,' 'your own.' It seems natural therefore, in this case, to translate 'its own.' The



the Hebrews—an unuttered mental background inspiring the whole Epistle. This may be seen, for instance, in the passage concerning Melchizedek, who was 'without father, without mother, without genealogy' (He 7<sup>3</sup>). Jesus (he would say) is like him. He stands alone—detached from all men; subject to no man; complicated by no man; free from the 'letter' of what they wrote, as also of the priestly functions they performed: what prophets and priests said and did were but 'figures'; Jesus was the Consummator of all these: no person, nor prophecy, is to be superimposed upon Him in the 'letter,' though an abundance of both sayings and doings may be superimposed in the 'spirit'—as may be seen, not only in His likeness to Melchizedek, but also to the whole Jewish system of priesthood and sacrifice—the one taken as the 'figure,' the Other as the Consummator of all this—spiritually and synthetically interpreted.

Jesus thus has the Old Testament, not on His shoulder as a burden to be borne, as being tethered to the 'letter,' or the 'flesh,' of this or that prophecy, but *at His feet*—as something (both in the concrete and in general) to be dominated and consummated spiritually. In brief, this method of interpreting the Messiahship of Jesus in relation to Old Testament prophecy freed Him from the 'letter' of prophecy and pledged Him to the spirit of it only—and this *spirit* He abundantly consummated. We are not to interpret 'Him who was to come' by the Old Testament writers taken literally, but the Old Testament writers by Him who came.

This synthetic conception also frees us from the 'letter' of Old Testament prophecy; also from the difficulties which modern historical criticism casts around the traditional method of interpreting such prophecy; and we can accept the 'assured results' of such criticism while retaining a strong and stedfast faith in the Messiahship of Jesus, as that Messiahship was 'mirrored in Christ's mind'—and this without in any way impugning the judgment and accuracy of Jesus', and of His Apostles' statements that the Scriptures *do* bear witness to Him—that is, to a suffering and glorified Servant; for, undeniably, in *spirit* they do so testify overwhelmingly—even as they similarly bear witness to the truth of Christ's spiritual synthesis of the 'kingdom.' Without a suffering, a dying, a risen, and a glorified Messiah, the spirit of Old Testament prophecy, in all its highest and best spiritual cravings and aspirations, could not have been consummated.

This conception also demonstrates, in its own right, that Jesus alone originated it; for no man of that day could possibly have conceived it but He.

But how could Jesus help His Apostles to see the truth of His spiritual synthesis other than by bringing to their notice, both by word and deed, the various 'strands' (or some of them) by means of which He constructed that synthesis?—these 'strands,' of course, being the spiritual desires, expectations, hopes, actions, longings, and aspirations of the men of God as recorded in the Old Testament taken in their highest and most spiritual aspects.<sup>1</sup> What did all these mean and point to? It was Christ's mission both to bring their import to light, and that import to a consummation. 'Many prophets and righteous men *desired* to see the things which ye see, *and saw them not*; and to *hear* the things which ye hear, *and heard them not*' (Mt 13<sup>17</sup>). This is profoundly true. The writings of the 'prophets and righteous men' reveal a confused medley of both high and worthy, and low and unworthy, desires and aspirations: they did not see clearly what they (and the world) really needed. But how could Jesus, and (after Him) His Apostles, show what all these desires foreshadowed, and how Jesus consummated them, but by appealing to these same hopes and aspirations? It was, we may believe, on the road to Emmaus that Jesus tried to make the two disciples grasp His synthetic conception of Messiahship, and of the Messiah's kingdom; and, as regards the others, during the great forty days. They would not be (at least were not) prepared for this until after His resurrection.

In the Apostles' testimony to Christ's Messiahship the records indicate that the *method* by which Jesus constructed His conception of His Messiahship in relation to Old Testament prophecy fell into the background; while they and their opponents became submerged under the wrangling about the many and various 'strands' of the synthesis—the synthetic conceptions of both Messiahship and kingdom being too high for general apprehension—or at least recognition. We need not be surprised at this submersion in details, for it almost invariably happens in every prolonged controversy. Sooner or later the main point is lost, and both talkers and writers ramble on 'in wandering mazes lost.' In the course of the Apostles' controversy with the Jews, the Apostolic writers seem to us occasionally to run some of the

<sup>1</sup> The writer would include the apocalyptic literature as furnishing some of these 'strands.'



'strands' to death; while others of their 'strands' we could hardly regard as such at all. We, again, need not be surprised, for enthusiasm often overshoots the mark.

*Note.*—Echoes of this synthetic conception may probably be seen in the following passages in St. Paul's Epistles: 'We serve in newness of the *spirit*, and not in oldness of the letter' (Ro 7<sup>6</sup>). Here 'letter' seems to connote 'the Law'; '*spirit*,' spiritual principles. 'Who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter,

but of the *spirit*' (2 Co 3<sup>6</sup>)—not of the 'letter' of the old Covenant but of its '*spirit*' . . . 'how shall not rather the ministration of the *spirit* be with glory?' (v.<sup>8</sup>)—'*spirit*' here is connected with 'righteousness' in the next verse, and does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but rather to the '*spirit*' of the Law. 'Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty' (v.<sup>17</sup>)—meaning that Jesus stands for the '*spirit*' of the Law, and freedom from its 'letter'—the veil is removed. This interpretation seems to harmonize with the context.

## Entre Nous.

### The Mysticism of Mary Webb.

There is a magnificent wealth of pulpit illustration in the fiction of the nineteenth century. It is so rich in moral seriousness, in dignity, in style, that we do not wonder it is often quoted in the best sermons. But perhaps a more popular appeal might be made to the younger generation if some of our contemporary writers of fiction were chosen by preachers for quotation.

Take Mary Webb, for example, who died, in early middle age, two years ago. Her father was a Welsh schoolmaster, her mother the daughter of an Edinburgh doctor who claimed a distant kinship with Sir Walter Scott. She spent most of her days in Shropshire, and writes about the countryside and the country folk that she knew and loved. Her best book is undoubtedly *Precious Bane*, a novel which was awarded the 'Femina Vie Heureuse' Prize for 1924-25, and which will certainly find and keep a niche in the shelves of our classical English fiction.

We can only, at the moment, glance at one facet of this bright polished gem. What reflection do we find there of Mary Webb's attitude to religion?

In the first place, we have to remember that a novel written in the autobiographical form does not necessarily mirror, in the words of the hero or heroine, the mind of the author. Yet in the case of *Precious Bane* the writing is so simple, so intimate, so real a revelation of a good woman's heart, that even while we caution ourselves, we confess that nothing will make us believe that we have not here on those pages the soul of the author herself laid bare. For the sake of the literary

proprieties, however, let us say that we are looking upon the heroine's—upon Prudence Sarn's—attitude to religion. It is reverent, more, it is adoring, and yet there is a strong vein of agnosticism, both religious and philosophical, running through the woman's mind. We quote from her own words, and we must remember that it is a Shropshire country lass, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, who is speaking. 'Kester said the past and the future were two shuttles in the hands of the Lord, weaving Eternity. Kester was a weaver himself, which may have made him think of it thus. But I think we cannot know what the past and the future are. We are so small and helpless on the earth that is like a green rush cradle where mankind lie, looking up at the stars, but not knowing what they be.' And again, speaking of her dead mother: 'Shall we meet again in the other world, dear soul, and atone to you for our heedlessness?' And again, after describing, with a marvellous beauty of style, an early morning ride to market, she adds: 'It seemed to me that it was like a great open book with fair pages, in which all might read. Only it was written in a secret script. . . . For indeed every tree and bush and little flower and sprig of moss, every least herb, sweet or bitter, every bird that furrows the air and worm that furrows the soil, every beast going heavily about its task of living, be to us a riddle with no answer. We know not what they do. And all this great universe that seems so still is but like a sleeping top, that looks still from very swiftness. But why it turns, and what we and all creatures do in the giddy steadfastness of it, we know not.'



And again: 'We are His mommets that made us, I do think. He takes us from the box, whiles, and saith, "Dance now!" Or maybe it must bow, or wave a hand, or fall down in a swoond. Then He puts it back in box, for the part is played . . . the evil mommets do His will as well as the good . . . there was a mommet once called Judas, and if he had started away from his set part in fear, we should have none of us been saved. Which is all a very strange mystery, and so we must leave it. But it being so, I think we do wrongly to blame ill-doers too hardly. . . . But if we be chosen for a pleasant, merry part, how thankful we ought to be, giving great praise, and helping those less fortunate.' Less agnosticism in this, perhaps, than fatalism, and yet, really, there is more of autobiography than of theology about it. Mary Webb would never have written that passage unless she herself had played a good and innocent part in the Play. 'How thankful *we* ought to be.' That is where the emphasis lies. There, and in these other words, 'It being so, I think we do wrongly to blame ill-doers too hardly.' Forgiveness and gratitude, she is finding excuses for those two lovely things.

And that brings us to another quality of her work. If it is touched with agnosticism, it is also more than touched, it is permeated, with a childlike faith, the happy faith of a daughter at home in her Father's house. When her lover, still undeclared, was in danger, Prudence followed him and saved him. And so she excuses herself: 'Something drove me on, so that I must seek him in the crowd, and keep nigh him, as if I was his angel for that day. A poor angel, but God minds not much, I think, what His angels be, so that they do His work proper. The shepherd's collie that runs home to warn the missus that her man has fallen down the rock, is His angel sure enough, though he may be a mongrel of the very worst, with ears as flat as a spaniel.' At home in her Father's house, did we say? Well, not always at home, but sure, at least, of going thither. After her first sight of Kester, her lover, she writes: 'Shall we know, when we come into His presence that made us, what outward seeming His majesty has? No. Only our hearts will tremble in the light.'

Perhaps the greatest passage in the book is one that is too long to quote here, and that would need to be quoted in full, or not at all. A beautiful book might be made—and there this passage would find its place—of the Conversions of the Saints. And the records would be singularly alike in many particulars. But there is a very individual touch at the end of Prudence Sarn's account. She was afflicted, we must know, with a 'hare-shotten lip,' as it was called, and that tragic little fact has much to do with the whole story of her life. So, after describing her great experience, she adds: 'I fell to thinking how all this blessedness of the attic came to me through being curst. For if I hadna had a hare-lip to frighten me away into my own lonesome soul, this would never have come to me. The apples would have crowded all in vain to see a marvel, for I should never have known the glory that came from the other side of silence.'

The fault of the book, perhaps, lies just here: that this most authentic, and, if one might say so, classic account of the conversion of a soul is not followed, during the great tragic episodes at the end of the book, by an adequate reaction, on the part of the converted one, to those tragic happenings. When her brother's sins of selfishness and material ambition have finally involved him in ruin, and he sits beside his sister in black despair, she had no word of ultimate consolation or encouragement to give to him. 'You just think of getting on,' she advises, 'and scraping and saving as you use to do, and dunna think of Jancis or Mother till you're more settled in your mind.' Is it true to life that such a great experience as that described earlier in the book could pass over any human soul without leaving it something more to say, in the most desperate reaches of life's tragic happenings, than that?

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